

THE ROMANCE OF EARLY EXPLORATION

WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF INTERESTING
DISCOVERIES, THRILLING ADVENTURES
AND WONDERFUL BRAVERY OF THE
EARLY EXPLORERS

BY
ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF
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ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE

THE Author has been encouraged by the reception given to *The Romance of Modern Exploration* to write a companion volume on the adventures of early travellers and explorers. For convenience' sake the period covered ends at A.D. 1600, a date sufficiently advanced to permit mention of the first polar expeditions in which English navigators played so important a part.

The persons whose exploits are recorded in this book were, with three exceptions, of European extraction. The exceptions are Hanno the Carthaginian, the Chinese Hwen Tsang, and Ibn Batuta the Moor. The first is remarkable as the pioneer of exploration down the West African coast; the second, as being the most distinguished of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims; the third, for the extraordinary extent of his roamings. All three are worthy to rank among Marco Polo, Odoric, and the other travellers here mentioned, and it is hoped that their inclusion will add to the interest of these pages.

The word "exploration" which appears in the title has been given a sufficiently free interpretation to cover the Pilgrims and Missionary Friars. No apology is needed, however, for such freedom, since both classes of travellers were incidentally, if not primarily, explorers of no mean order, to whom we owe some of the most valuable descriptions that we have of the Levant and Asia generally. On the other hand, the conquests of the Spaniards in the New World and of the Portuguese in India and the East Indies are merely referred to, as less pertinent to our subject than the adventures of

PREFACE

men who went, unsupported by any large force, in quest of new lands.

The author is greatly indebted to the valuable publications of the Hakluyt Society for their commentaries on the narratives of the early explorers. Any reader who wishes to become intimately acquainted with the fortunes of the men who dared great things by sea and land would do well to consult these works, all edited by men of high standing as scholars and geographical experts. Acknowledgment is also made to Mr. John Murray for details used in the illustration of the "Travelling Houses of the Tartars."

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THE ROMANCE OF EARLY EXPLORATION

CHAPTER I

THE INFANCY OF EXPLORATION

The causes of exploration—Old-time ideas of geography—The Jews—Homer—Aristotle—Eratosthenes—Ptolemy—Peculiar beliefs about the torrid zone—The hardships of early navigation—The magnetic compass—Necho's expedition to circumnavigate Africa—The Nasamonians—Hanno's *Periplus*—Herodotus—Alexander's campaign—The voyage of Nearchus.

THE influences which have led to our gradually extended knowledge of the earth's surface may be thus summarized: (a) *Conquest*, resulting from a nation's outgrowing the bonds imposed upon it by the physical nature of the country in which its infancy was passed; (b) *Trade*, stimulated by a civilized nation's increasing love of luxury; (c) *Love of adventure* and curiosity about the unknown; (d) *The desire for scientific knowledge*.

These cannot be separated the one from the other by distinct and hard lines. The need of fresh trading areas led bold spirits to roam farther and farther afield. Con-

OLD-TIME IDEAS OF GEOGRAPHY

quest sometimes foreran trade; trade sometimes opened the way to conquest. And beneath them all at different periods has lain a substratum of zeal in the cause of the religion confessed by conqueror or explorer.

With conquests we have not to deal in this volume, excepting in so far as they form a background against which the deeds of individuals are thrown into relief. The expansion of trade, again, does not concern us, apart from the stimulus which it gave to the bold navigator to steer his bark through the terrors of unploughed oceans, in search of new regions for the merchant to exploit. Our object is rather to follow the fortunes of this brave traveller and that; to look through their eyes upon the unfolding marvels of the unknown; and to watch the development of the world-map during the centuries prior to the seventeenth of the Christian era. The romances of our theme is truly great, for these early explorers were content to take their lives in their hands, and face perils which might well have appalled men of good courage; while the results of their travels have, in some cases at least, marked epochs in the history of the human race. A caravan struggling through the desert, or a tiny ship battling with ocean storms, has before now carried the destiny of a nation.

In order to make a proper estimate of the achievements of early explorers we must try to put ourselves back into previous centuries. We must imagine that we have no sumptuous atlases; not even a fixed idea of the shape of the earth. Homer considered that the earth was like a circular plate, round the edge of which ran the ocean in

THE JEWS

an ever-flowing stream. The heavens were to him a, brazen vault—the Jewish “firmament,” enclosing the earth like a dish-cover, and supported at its centre by the pillars of Atlas. The Homeric poems show no desire to solve the riddle of the rising and setting of the sun, moon, and stars. This “flat” theory persisted for centuries. Anaximander (B.C. 600), who first published a map, held the earth to be of a cylindrical form, like a stone pillar, the circular upper surface representing its inhabited portion. In the sixth century A.D. Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Egyptian monk, published a treatise which maintained that the earth is a rectangular plane, round which the heavens rise on all four sides like the four walls of a room, and support, somewhere far aloft, a vaulted roof, the dwelling-place of God and his angels. In the centre of the floor lies the inhabited earth, encircled by ocean, beyond which, in some corner or other, lies the Paradise of Adam. To get over the astronomical difficulty, Cosmas imagines a lofty conical mountain in the northern part of the floor about which the heavenly bodies rotate daily. In the summer the sun takes a turn round the apex of the cone and is therefore hidden for a few hours only; but in the winter travels behind the base and so disappears for a longer period. Such, says Cosmas, is the doctrine of Holy Scripture! Though it would indeed be hard to gather from the Bible what idea of the earth’s shape the more scientific Jews had.

The belief of Homer and Cosmas was current among the general public till the sixteenth century, and, such is the perversity of the human intellect, has found ex-

ARISTOTLE—ERATOSTHENES

ponents in very recent times—witness John Hampden's *New Manual of Biblical Cosmography*, published in 1877, written to prove that the earth is a plane with the North Pole as its centre ; and William Carpenter's *One Hundred Proofs that the Earth is not a Globe* (1885).

Yet a much more accurate conception of the earth's real form ran parallel with these fantastic ideas. Aristotle (B.C. 384–322) proved from the different altitude of the Pole Star in different places that the earth must necessarily be a globe ; and hazarded the remark that one might pass over the ocean from the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar) to India. The same theory was upheld by Eratosthenes, a famous geographer of the third century B.C. ; and early in the Christian era we find an eminent Greek astronomer stating that the doctrine of the earth's sphericity was received by all learned men with the exception of the Epicureans. Ptolemy (150 A.D.) had no doubts on the subject, and calculated the circumference of the earth at the Equator with surprising accuracy. Dante, in his *Divine Comedy* (written 1318 A.D.), takes the globular form for granted, and after his time the correct theory was undoubtedly that of scientific men generally. We must not forget, however, that the great mass of the people and the more ignorant of the clergy still regarded the earth as a huge plate till the time of Columbus, and their opinion must have influenced to some extent those men who wished to sail into unknown tracts of the ocean.

The distribution of dry land and water over the earth's surface could be decided only by actual exploration, and

PECULIAR BELIEFS

we are therefore prepared to find very conflicting views on this subject. Theory ran constantly ahead of knowledge. Eratosthenes laid it down that dry land was of but comparatively small extent, and that the Unknown must be vast tracts of ocean. Ptolemy, on the other hand, took the opposite view; and his map shows Africa extended along the south so as to join the mainland of Asia, thus enclosing the Indian Ocean. His "continental" theory of landlocked seas surrounded by dismal deserts and impenetrable quagmires had more general credence than the "oceanic" theory of Eratosthenes during the Middle Ages, and probably postponed the circumnavigation of Africa. It remained for Prince Henry's gallant explorers to show, in the fifteenth century, how entirely false was the reasoning of Ptolemy.

As a result of uncertainty as to the earth's shape and the nature of its surface, curious beliefs were current concerning the physical "zones." The torrid zone was long regarded as a region of flaming fire, where human life would be extinguished, and only such creatures as salamanders and gnomes could exist. This inference was due, no doubt, to acquaintance with the terrific cold of Northern Russia (the Scythia of the ancients) and the scorching winds of the Sahara. Pomponius Mela (50 A.D.) took pains to show that the surface of the globe is divided into five zones, of which only two can support human life; these being separated by an impassable burning region. The mariner who turned his prow towards southern seas therefore started somewhat handicapped even by a partial belief in this "fiery zone" theory. Nor was it easy for

EARLY NAVIGATION

him to shake off the fear that, if he ventured far over the horizon, his ship might slide downhill and be drawn into some awful whirlpool or abyss. Furthermore, as children of to-day entertain, in spite of reason, a sneaking dread of darkness, so the ancients and medieval folk readily peopled unknown regions with monstrous beings, marine and terrestrial, all eager for human prey.

We may add to the mental discomforts provoked by untrained imagination the actual hardships and difficulties that faced the early explorer, especially the navigator. Our wonder should be, not that exploration was so gradual, but that it was so rapid, considering the small size of the craft which carried the mariners of old. The crews were tightly packed into the narrowest of quarters. Provisions and water could be carried in but very limited quantities. Meat was necessarily pickled, and bread of the driest forms, while fresh vegetables were practically unknown on shipboard. Consequently the mortality among crews often reached fearful proportions, and where calms or adverse winds were encountered, sometimes annihilated the ship's company.

If the early voyagers clung timorously to the sea-coast, fearful of losing sight of land, we can easily understand their reluctance while the magnetic compass was as yet unknown. This remarkable invention appeared in Europe during the twelfth century, at a date not exactly determined, having been imported by Crusaders who had trafficked with Arab traders of the Eastern seas. It did not, however, come into general use till a century afterwards; and as late as 1258 Brunetti Latini refers to it as

THE MAGNETIC COMPASS

a quite novel thing. A passage from a letter written by him to a friend is well worth quoting at length :—

“The Parliament being summoned to assemble at Oxford, I did not fail to see Friar Bacon as soon as I arrived, and (among other things) he showed me a black ugly stone called a magnet, which has the surprising property of drawing iron to it; and upon it, if a needle be rubbed, and afterwards fastened to a straw so that it shall swim upon water, the needle will instantly turn towards the Pole Star: therefore, be the night ever so dark, so that neither moon or star be visible, yet shall the mariner be able, by the help of this needle, to steer his vessel aright. This discovery, which appears useful in so great a degree to all who travel by sea, must remain concealed until other times, because no master mariner dares to use it lest he should fall under the imputation of being a magician; nor would sailors venture themselves out to sea under his command if he took with him an instrument which carries so great an appearance of being constructed under the influence of some infernal spirit. The time may arrive when these prejudices, which are of such great hindrance to researches into the secrets of nature, will be overcome; and it will be then that mankind shall reap the benefits of the labours of such learned men as Friar Bacon, and do justice to that industry and intelligence for which he and they now meet with no other return than obloquy and reproach.”¹

As a matter of fact, the compass had come into general

¹ Quoted from John Fiske's *The Discovery of America*.

THE ARGONAUTS

use before fifty more years had elapsed, and one of the ~~great~~ terrors of sea travel was dispelled. Yet it was still impossible to calculate with any accuracy the latitude and longitude of a vessel, and at the end of a long voyage a ship might be hundreds of miles away from the desired destination. The world had still a long time to wait for the invention of the sextant and marine chronometer. It is remarkable, therefore, that, in spite of the deficiency in scientific instruments, early navigators sometimes steered a surprisingly correct course. "Human faculty was taxed to its utmost, and human courage has never been more grandly displayed than by the glorious sailors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries."

From a general consideration of difficulties we will turn for a few pages to the achievements of isolated explorers in the period between the dawn of history and the commencement of the Christian era. These are, unfortunately, very few, and in most cases but briefly recorded in the annals of ancient historians.

The voyage of the Argonauts to the recesses of the Black Sea may be dismissed at once, as any truth that the story may contain is overlaid by so great a mass of mythological fancy that it is impossible to strain out any historical facts.

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer betray only a very circumscribed acquaintance with the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and here again fact and fiction are jumbled together. We can, indeed, follow the main track of the wanderings of Odysseus, who may have been an historical personage, though more probably he sums up

THE NASAMONIANS

in himself the adventures of a number of travellers who had been made the subject of earlier poems.

In the sixth century B.C., however, we begin to touch real exploration. Somewhere about the year 600 B.C. Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, dispatched a squadron of ships, manned by Phœnicians, from the Red Sea, with orders to sail round Africa and return by way of Gibraltar. According to Herodotus, "The Father of History," these mariners sailed along the east coast of the continent until autumn, when they landed and planted a corn crop. As soon as this had been reaped, they proceeded, and repeated the sowing for two more years, finally arriving at Alexandria. Herodotus relates an incident of the voyage which he regards as incredible—"though others perhaps may believe it"—viz. that the navigators asserted that, while rounding Africa, they had the sun on their *right* hand. The very fact that Herodotus disbelieved the assertion is the strongest evidence in favour of the truth of the story, which is, indeed, open to much doubt, though no absolute disproof is forthcoming.

About the same time a small band of Nasamonians (a Libyan tribe living on the north coast of Tripoli) made a determined effort to explore the Sahara. These five men, passing through the inhabited region, and a tract to the south of it, where wild beasts were numerous, entered the actual desert and traversed it many days in a westerly direction until they came to a grove of fruit trees. While they feasted on the fruit a number of black dwarfs surrounded them and made them prisoners. They were led

HANNO'S *PERIPLUS*

through very extensive marshes to a city with black inhabitants similar in colour and size to their captors. This city stood on the bank of a river flowing east and west, and it was full of crocodiles. After spending some time in captivity the young men escaped and returned home safely. Herodotus concludes, quite wrongly, that the river in question was none other than the Nile. He should have said the Niger.


The narrative, like that previously mentioned, is incapable of either proof or refutation. Intrinsically, the feat was a possible one. All that can be said of it is, that it remained an isolated fact and had no influence on the civilization of Africa.

The third story which appears worthy of notice also deals with the Dark Continent. It is

THE VOYAGE OF HANNO THE CARTHAGINIAN

to which the date 520 B.C. has been assigned. The narrative (called the *Periplus*, or Circumnavigation) professes to have been handed down by the commander himself, who had it engraved on a bronze tablet set up by him in the temple of Moloch on his return to Carthage. A Greek version of it got into circulation at a later date.

The primary object of the expedition appears to have been colonization. As the *Periplus* is probably unknown to the majority of our readers, we will give a translation¹ of it in full:—

“ was decreed by the Carthaginians that Hanno should undertake a voyage beyond the Pillars of

¹ That of Falconer.

HANNO'S *PERIPLUS*

Hercules, and found Liby-Phœnician cities. He sailed accordingly with sixty ships of fifty oars each and a body of men and women to the number of thirty thousand (?) and provisions and other necessaries.

“When we had passed the Pillars on our voyage and had sailed beyond them for two days, we founded the first city, which we named Thymaterium. Below it lay an extensive plain. Proceeding thence towards the west, we came to Soloeis (Cape Cantin), a promontory of Libya, a place thickly covered with trees, where we erected a temple to Poseidon; and again proceeded for the space of half a day towards the east until we arrived at a lake lying far from the sea and filled with abundance of large reeds. There elephants and a great number of other wild beasts were feeding.

“Having passed the lake about a day's sail, we founded cities near the sea, called Cariconticos, and Gytte, Acra and Melita, and Arambys. Thence we came to the great river Lixus, which flows through Libya. On its banks the Lixitæ, a shepherd tribe, were feeding flocks, amongst whom we continued some time on friendly terms. Beyond the Lixitæ dwelt the inhospitable Æthiopians, who pasture on wild country intersected by large mountains from which they say the river Lixus flows. In the neighbourhood of the mountains lived the Troglodytæ, men of various appearances, whom the Lixitæ describe as swifter in running than horses.

“Having procured interpreters from them, we coasted along a desolate country towards the south two days. Thence we proceeded towards the east the course of a

HANNO'S *PERIPLUS*

day. Here we found in a recess of a certain bay a small island, containing a circle of five stadia, where we settled a colony, and called it Cerne. We judged from our voyage that this place lay in a direct line with Carthage, for the length of our voyage from Carthage to the Pillars was equal to that from the Pillars to Cerne.

“We then came to a lake which we reached by sailing up a large river called Chretes. This lake had three islands, larger than Cerne; from which, proceeding a day's sail, we came to the extremity of the lake, that was overhung by large mountains inhabited by savage men, clothed in skins of wild beasts, who drove us away by throwing stones and hindered us from landing. Sailing thence, we came to another river (the Senegal) that was large and broad, and full of crocodiles and river-horses; whence, returning back, we again came to Cerne.

“Thence we sailed towards the south twelve days, coasting the shore, the whole of which is inhabited by Æthiopians, who would not wait our approach, but fled from us. Their language was not intelligible, even to the Lixitæ who were with us. Towards the last day we approached some large mountains covered with trees, the wood of which was sweet-scented and variegated. Having sailed by these mountains for two days we came to an immense opening of the sea (probably the mouth of the Gambia); on each side of which, towards the continent, was a plain, from which we saw by night fire arising at intervals in all directions either more or less.

“Having taken in water there, we sailed forwards five days near the land, until we came to a large bay, which

HANNO'S *PERIPLUS*

our interpreter informed us was called the Western Horn (now called the Gulf of Bissago). In this was a large island, and in the island a salt-water lake, and in this another island, where, when we landed, we could discover nothing in the daytime except trees, and in the night we saw many fires burning and heard the sound of pipes, cymbals, drums, and confused shouts. We were then afraid, and our diviners induced us to abandon the island. Sailing quickly thence, we went past a country burning with fires and perfumes, and streams of fire supplied by it fell into the sea. The country was impassable on account of the heat. We sailed quickly thence, being much terrified; and passing on for four days we discovered at night a country full of fire. In the middle was a lofty fire larger than the rest, which seemed to touch the stars. When day came we discovered it to be a large hill called the Chariot of the Gods (probably Mt. Sagres). On the third day after our departure thence, having sailed by those streams of fire, we arrived at a bay called the Southern Horn, at the bottom of which lay an island full of savage people, the greater part of whom were women, whose bodies were hairy and whom our interpreter called Gorillæ. Though we pursued the men we could not seize any of them, but all fled from us, escaping over the precipices and defending themselves with stones. Three women were, however, taken, but they attacked their conductors with their teeth and hands, and could not be prevailed upon to accompany us. Having killed them, we flayed them and brought their skins to Carthage. We did not sail further on, our provisions failing us."

HERODOTUS

Such is the story of Hanno and his companions. Almost all the geographical statements made by the admiral have been reconciled with modern maps, and we may therefore assume that in the narrative we have a true chapter of real exploration. His performance is chiefly interesting from the touch of natural history which the encounter with the "hairy folk," or chimpanzees, affords. Writers of much later date exaggerated the extent of the voyage—Pliny speaking of Hanno as having circumnavigated the continent, while Arrian, the biographer of Alexander the Great, represents him as making a long voyage of thirty-five days into the Atlantic Ocean. Reference to a good map of Africa will enable the reader to follow the track of the Carthaginian colonists.

HERODOTUS

Among the great travellers of the world Herodotus the Greek holds a foremost place, on account of the extent of his journeys, as well as for the detailed description of things seen, which forms one of the most valuable items of classical literature.

This remarkable man was born at Halicarnassus, in Asia Minor, in or about the year 484 B.C. Leaving home when twenty years old, he travelled for seventeen years in almost all the known countries of the ancient world. He visited Egypt and ascended the Nile as far as Elephantine, making copious notes of what he saw and of what the priests told him about the past history of their country. Turning westwards, he penetrated to Cyrene. In Asia he visited Tyre, Babylon, Ecbatana,

HERODOTUS

and Susa. The many Greek colonies scattered about Asia Minor also received his attention. In Europe he explored the countries to the north of the Black Sea, and is credited with a personal examination of the route along which Xerxes marched his troops to the famous assault upon Greece. The islands of the *Ægean Sea*, the great oracles and cities of Greece, and South Italy were also included in his itinerary. Wherever he went he kept his pen in his hand. Like many a writer of later date, he had not sufficient scientific knowledge to weigh correctly the value of much of the information which he got at second-hand, and he therefore spins in quite good faith a number of "travellers' yarns" which would do credit to Sir John Mandeville himself. Among them is that of the *Phoenix*,¹ a fabulous monster, which he seems first to have introduced into the literature of Europe. To him, as to Homer, *Æthiopia* is the fabled country, where gold is common, where spice trees bloom, and people are of almost superhuman beauty and live to a great age, thanks to the virtue of a miraculous fountain; while *Scythia* is the abode of griffins and one-eyed *Arimaspians* who guard the desert gold. Here he has undoubtedly incorporated into his history stories which were current coin in his day in many countries of the then known world.

Of the *Phœnicians* and *Carthage* he says practically nothing, which is all the more striking as the *Phœnicians* were then at the zenith of their power. He refers, however, to the *Cassiterides*, or *Tin Islands*—*Scilly* and *Corn-*

¹ Bk. II, cap. 73.

ALEXANDER'S CAMPAIGN

wall—"from which tin comes to us." We must not forget that the first six books of his History are an introduction to the main theme of the work—an account of the invasion of Greece by the Persians, an episode in history with which the Phœnicians had little to do.

The Asiatic campaign of Alexander (333-23 B.C.) greatly extended European acquaintance with the East. Greek armies traversed Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, Beloochistan, and the Punjaub, laying the foundation of the Græco-Asiatic Empire of Alexander's successors. "It was not merely, or even principally, by its immediate results that it produced so great a change, but by the opening it afforded for subsequent exploration, and especially for the more careful examination of countries already known to the Greeks in a general way."¹ In the year 326 B.C. a series of victories had carried Alexander to the banks of the River Hesydrus, or Sutlej, the most easterly point reached by his expedition. Thence he retraced his steps as far as the Jhelam, where he embarked his army on a large flotilla and sailed down the Indus to its confluence with the ocean. Being desirous of opening fresh trade routes with India by sea as well as by land, he boldly decided to send the vessels on a voyage along the coast of the Persian Gulf, while he led the land forces through Beloochistan. The fleet was put under the command of Nearchus, who fortunately was of a literary turn of mind, and kept a log-book from which he afterwards compiled a detailed account of his journey which has come down to us in the greater work of Arrian, Alexander's biographer.

¹ Bunbury's *History of Ancient Geography*, I, 407.

THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS

THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS

The craft which Nearchus had in his charge were mostly small undecked galleys and row-boats, ill-suited to withstand the sudden storms of the Indian Ocean. Following the custom of pre-compass navigation, the fleet hugged the shore. Progress was slow—about thirty miles a day—but to the mariners it afforded a succession of new and marvellous sights, notably the tides of that ocean, which were astonishing to men accustomed to the tideless waters of the Mediterranean. Again and again the violence of the wind compelled them to beach their ships and resist the attacks of natives, armed with long stakes having fire-hardened points. The southern coast of Persia they found to be inhabited by people who lived chiefly on fish, and fed their sheep with the same food owing to the scarcity of pasture.¹ The Greeks tried the mutton, which tasted like the flesh of sea-fowl. Fish-bones formed a great part of the material of which the Icthyophagi built their huts, and the skeletons of whales supplied beams and door-posts.

One of the most curious and interesting episodes of the voyage was an encounter with whales off a town called Cyiza. We may easily picture the astonishment and dismay of the Greek sailors when columns of water—at first thought to be waterspouts—suddenly shot into the air in front of their prows, followed by the appearance of huge bodies of terrific outline. The oars, we read, fell

¹ Modern travellers also comment upon this strange feeding of cattle, which seems to be inexorably prescribed by natural conditions.

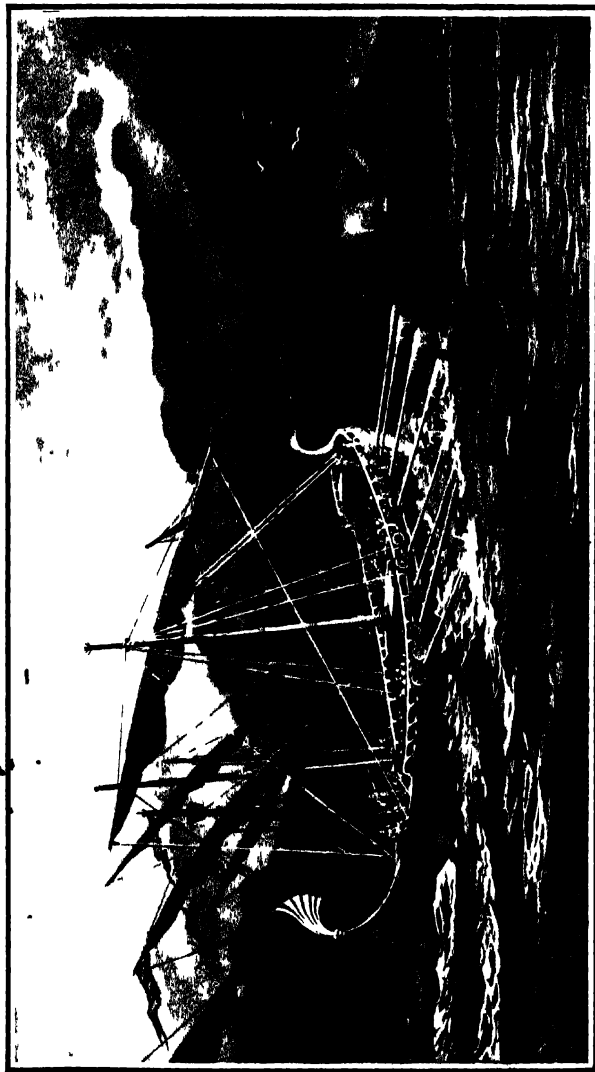
THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS

from their hands, and a panic would have ensued had not Nearchus, pushing his ship into the forefront of the line, ordered an attack on the monsters. The vessels were drawn up in battle array, and at a given signal the rowers bent to their oars, raising a shout while the trumpets sounded the charge. "Upon this the monsters plunged into the deep as if frightened by the attack, and rising again astern of the fleet continued to blow as magnificently, as before. The danger was past; the seamen shouted and clapped their hands upon their unexpected deliverance, and the judgment of Nearchus was as much their admiration as his fortitude."¹ A brave act indeed it was, for had the whales turned upon those small ships they could easily have wrought havoc among the expedition; and we can therefore excuse the exaggerated accounts which subsequently represented the whales as being as much larger than real whales as real whales were than the greatest fish previously seen.

By another deed Nearchus showed that his reason was superior to superstition. While coasting along the country of the Fish-Eaters they passed a desolate island which, according to local legend, no ship or human being could approach without being immediately destroyed. The admiral, however, went in person to the island, landed, and compelled the sailors to do likewise, thus exploding the myth in a most effective manner. But legends have a long life, and many centuries afterwards it reappears in the voyage of Sinbad of the Sea.

Doubling a cape, the fleet came to a country rich in

¹ *Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients*, Dean Vincent.



THE GREYS ENCOUNTER A SCHOOL OF WHALES

While Clearchus, Admiral of the fleet sent by Alexander the Great to explore the coast between the mouth of the Indus and the Persian Gulf, was coasting along the shores of Beloochistan, his vessels encountered a school of whales sporting themselves in the ocean. The admiral terrified the sailors. But Clearchus gave the order to form line and bear down upon the whales, which immediately made off.

THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS

agricultural produce. At Mosarna Nearchus engaged a pilot to navigate his vessel as far as the Persian Gulf, the entrance to which they reached after many delays and hardships. Near the mouth of the River Anamis stragglers wandering on shore met a man who said that he was from the Macedonian army, which was not far away. Nearchus at once landed, and with a small escort set out in search of Alexander, after seeing his men safely encamped. Alexander, on hearing of the approach of his admiral and a few followers, concluded that they were the only survivors of the expedition, and deep was his joy when Nearchus explained that the vessels and their crews were safe and sound. "I swear," he said, "that I have greater pleasure in the success of this enterprise than in the reduction of all Asia to my power. For if my fleet had perished I should have considered it as an overbalance to all the good fortune which has attended me."

After spending a few days in festivities Nearchus rejoined his fleet and pushed up the east coast of the gulf, passing by the then barren island of Oaracta, which afterwards became famous, under its medieval name of Ormuz, as a great trading station. On one occasion three ships ran aground on a sandbank, but were got off without any damage. Nearchus comments upon the pearl fisheries of the gulf, the first mention which we have of this important industry in these waters. His description of the coast and the country inland is detailed, and quite agrees with the observations of modern travellers.

Thanks to the skill of his pilots, Nearchus reached the mouth of the Euphrates without mishap, and ascended a

THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS

confluent—the Karoon—to a point where he fell in with the land army. Honours were showered upon him by his royal master, and the whole host joined in well-earned congratulations.

The voyage of about 1200 miles occupied five months. This slow rate of progress is satisfactorily accounted for by the fact that Nearchus deliberately examined the coast as he went along. Though, owing to the death of Alexander, his discoveries remained without immediate fruit, the voyage is of importance as the first precisely recorded event in the history of navigation, and it eclipses the voyage of Hanno as much as it is itself eclipsed by the subsequent adventures of Vasco da Gama and Columbus.

ALARCON'S SHIPS STRUGGLING WITH THE GREAT HORN OF THE COLORADO IN 1540



CHAPTER II

JOURNEYS OF THE PILGRIMS

The fashion of pilgrimage—Silvia's tour in the East—Who Silvia was—Sinai—Suez—Egypt—Mount Nebo—The land of Uz—St. Thomas's tomb at Edessa—A legend of Edessa—Haran—Her return to Europe—The pilgrimage of Arculf—How we got an account of it—Jerusalem—What Arculf saw there—The miraculous napkin—The place of the Ascension—Desert food—Alexandria—The Pharos—Constantinople—The value of the pilgrimages—The Chinese pilgrim, Hwen Tsang—His early years—His love of learning—He starts for India—Adventures in the desert—Bactria—Enters India by the Cabul route—His doings in India—Adventure with pirates—Returns to China—The devotion of Chinese pilgrims.

THE gradual decay of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity as a world-power were contemporaneous. As Rome once sent out her legions into distant countries, so, after the formal adoption of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 313, did Christendom despatch its pilgrims to the shrines of the Holy Land and the countries of the patriarchs.

About A.D. 333 a regular guide-book was compiled to help the pilgrims travelling from Bordeaux to Syria via North Italy, the Balkan States, Constantinople, and Asia Minor. The fashion of visiting holy places originated with Helena, the mother of Constantine, who made an

SILVIA'S TOUR IN THE EAST

expedition to Jerusalem, and there, so the story runs, discovered the Holy Sepulchre and the True Cross. People of all classes were soon on their way to the places rendered sacred by their association with the life of Christ ; and of the thousands who performed what may be called the Grand Tour of Palestine and the neighbouring countries some half-score have left an account of their experiences.

From among these narratives we select for special notice those of Silvia and of Arculf, a French bishop. The former of these came to light only as recently as 1883, at Arezzo, in Tuscany, and is particularly interesting as the first detailed journal of an explorer of the gentler sex.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF SILVIA

The date of the pilgrimage is fixed, on the strength of the internal evidence, at A.D. 379 to 388. About Silvia herself we know only what she herself tells us incidentally in her log-book. We gather from this that she lived in the neighbourhood of the Rhone, to which river she compares the Euphrates. Latin was her native tongue—Latin of a very un-Ciceronian style. Her courteous reception wherever she went marks her as a person of some importance. With these meagre details we have to remain content. It has been suggested—and with some probability—that she is identical with St. Silvia of Aquitaine, a sister of Rufinus, Prefect of the East under Theodosius the Great, whose journey from Jerusalem to Egypt is recorded by the historian Palladius. Like our author, St. Silvia was well versed in the Scriptures—and very fond of quoting them. Also the date of her journey, her nationality, her rank,

WHO SILVIA WAS

and her halt at Constantinople on her return from the East, accord with the facts of the narrative now before us. The greatest obstacle in the way of complete identification is, that our traveller, while admiring the self-denial of the monks whom she meets in many places, does not show signs of any wish to imitate them very closely. When it comes to climbing the steep slopes of Mount Sinai she sighs for a litter; and profiting by the lesson, she rides an ass during her subsequent ascent of Mount Nebo. St. Silvia, on the other hand, is represented by Palladius as saying: "I am now sixty years of age; but except the tips of my fingers (and that for the purpose of communicating) no water has ever touched my face, or my feet, or any of my limbs. Even when, being seized with various diseases, I was urged by the physician to take a bath, I could not endure to give the flesh its due.¹ I have never slept on a couch *or travelled anywhere on a litter.*"

Doubts about Silvia's personality do not, however, affect the interest of her narrative. This begins abruptly at Mount Sinai, approached from the north-west through a "great valley, very flat and extremely beautiful," and past the Graves of Lust,² where the Israelites were plagued for desiring flesh food. Her guides showed Silvia the exact spot where the Golden Calf was made.

¹ Extreme personal uncleanness was a mark of the early ascetic. For fifty years St. Abraham the hermit refused to wash either his hands or his feet. Yet the biographer, bursting into enthusiasm over this austerity, says:—"His face reflected the purity of his soul." A rather left-handed compliment! Those monks who occasionally remembered that cleanliness is next to godliness were subjected to severe reproaches by their sterner brethren.

² Kibroth-Hattaavah.

SINAI

Of the mountain itself the traveller says: "It seems to be single, in the form of a ring; but when you enter the ring you see that there are several, the whole range being called the Mount of God. That special one at whose summit is the place where the majesty of God descended is in the centre of all. And although all which form the ring are so lofty as I think I never saw before, yet that central one on which the majesty of God descended is so much higher than the others, that when we had arrived at it all those mountains which we had previously thought lofty were below us as if they had been little hills. And this is truly an admirable thing, and, as I think, not without the grace of God, that although that central one specially called Sinai, on which the majesty of God descended, is higher than all the others, yet it cannot be seen until you come to its very foot, though before you are actually on it."

It was hard work climbing the mountain, as the path ran straight up the side instead of winding about it. The consciousness of merit in performing the task strengthened Silvia's limbs, and after an arduous struggle she reached the church built on the peak, served by "a blameless old man, a monk from early youth, and an ascetic; in short, a man quite worthy of the place." A brief service having been held, Silvia visited the cave where Moses sheltered during his stay on the mount when he ascended the second time to receive the Tables of the Law. From the summit she viewed Egypt, Palestine, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, also the territories of the Saracens; or rather, thought she saw them, for so wide a

EGYPT

prospect is not commanded, even from this lofty summit, and Silvia herself confesses that "it is hard to believe."

She next visited Horeb, a mountain joined to Sinai. Here the cave of Elijah was shown in front of the door of the church crowning the summit; also the rock on which Aaron and the seventy elders stood to receive the Law from the hands of Moses. The party then descended the eastern flank of the range into a valley, to see the bush at which Moses had been commanded to go to the help of his countrymen in Egypt. The bush stood in a garden outside a church. "It is alive to this day and sends out shoots," says Silvia. The identification of the many objects of historical interest was no doubt due partly to tradition and partly to the desire on the part of the residents to satisfy the curiosity of pilgrims. We cannot afford to smile at the exactness of localization when we consider that just the same thing is done in countries much nearer home, on equally slender authority. Almost every event recorded in the Scriptures as having happened in this district had its scene pointed out to the lady by her attentive escort—the site of the camp of the Children of Israel; the place where the calf was made; the spot whence Moses saw the Israelites dancing round the calf; the rock where Moses broke the tables in his wrath; and so on.

Having made the circuit of the Mount, Silvia travelled north-west to Suez, and thence to the land of Goshen, across the desert. "On that journey the holy man who went with us used to show us the several places which I was always seeking out in accordance with the Scriptures.

MOUNT NEBO

Some were on the right, some on the left of our path ; some at a distance from our course, others near. For I trust that you will credit me when I say that, as far as I can see, the Children of Israel journeyed in such a way that, whatever distance they went to the right, they returned to the left. As far as they went forward, so far used they to return backward ; and so they made their journey until they arrived at the Red Sea."

On the way Silvia passed through the ruins of Rameses, whose vast extent testified to the former greatness of the city. The only objects of note were two huge statues, cut out of boulders, which Christian tradition named as representations of Moses and Aaron, set up in their honour by the Israelites before their flight.

From Arabia (a town in Goshen) our traveller turned northwards and followed the ordinary high road to Pelusium, on the Mediterranean, after dismissing the military escort which had accompanied her through "suspected places." Her account of the land of Goshen shows that its fertility still marked it out as the garden of Egypt. It was a succession of vineyards, orchards, balsam plantations, and tilled fields and gardens ; a country to which the Israelites might well look back with regret from the barren wastes of the Sinaitic peninsula.

Her journey from Egypt to Palestine along the coast is dismissed in a few words. After a stay in Jerusalem, Silvia essays another mountaineering experience, this time on Mount Nebo, to the east of Jordan, whence Moses viewed the Promised Land. She describes in detail the wide prospect from the crest ; and expresses some dis-

A LEGEND OF EDESSA

appointment at not seeing the pillar into which Lot's wife was turned ; though, according to the Bishop of Zoar, it had been visible but a few years previously !

A further stay at Jerusalem was followed by a pilgrimage to the land of Uz—eastwards of the Sea of Galilee—and to the grave of the patriarch Job. This had been miraculously discovered by a hermit, at the end of a long cave. The word *Job* carved on the face of a stone silenced any doubts as to the identity of the person buried beneath. When Silvia visited it, the grave was enclosed in a church so built that it lay under the altar.

We next find our energetic pilgrim *en route* to Edessa, in Northern Mesopotamia, “to visit holy monks, who were said to be numerous there, and of such blameless life as baffles description ; and also for the sake of prayer at the martyr-memorial of St. Thomas the Apostle at Edessa, where his body is laid. From Jerusalem it was a journey of 400 miles, mostly through mountainous country ; but as Silvia meant to return to Europe by Antioch this expedition meant a detour of only 200 miles.

Tradition associated Abgar, King of Edessa, with our Lord, Who sent him a letter promising that St. Thomas should come to Edessa to preach the Gospel. The letter was read to Silvia by the Bishop, who told her that the gate through which the carrier bearing it entered had never since been polluted by the passage of an unclean person or a corpse. When, some time after its receipt, the Persians besieged Edessa a miraculous blindness fell upon them, so that they could not see, if they approached within three miles. This was due to the prayer of Abgar,

THE PILGRIMAGE OF ARCULF

who, standing letter in hand, called upon Christ to make good His promise that no enemy should come inside the city. Balked of their purpose, the Persians diverted the Euphrates and so cut off the Edessans' water-supply. But again God came to the aid of the besieged, for fountains at once burst forth within the walls, while the Euphrates was dried up, so that the Persians had to raise the blockade and retire to their own country.

From Edessa the pilgrim sought Haran, the abode of Abraham after he left Ur of the Chaldees. The monks showed her the well where Jacob watered Rachel's flocks, even the enormous stone which he moved from off the well-top; and the spot where Rachel stole her father Laban's household gods. Then, much comforted by the thought of duty done, Silvia returned to Antioch, and travelled through Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia to the Bosphorus and Constantinople. Here we lose sight of her; for the remainder of the book is occupied with a detailed account of the daily services at Jerusalem. Since she says, "It is already my purpose to go to Asia—to Ephesus—to the martyr-memorial of the blessed Apostle John, for the sake of prayer," we may reasonably suppose that she roamed further afield before turning her steps finally towards her convent in Gaul.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF ARCULF

Little more is known of this Bishop than is known of Silvia. Like her, he is supposed to have lived in France; and like her, he made a tour of the Holy Land—in or about the year A.D. 670. The ship which he boarded

JERUSALEM

for the return voyage was caught by a gale and carried into the Atlantic, as far north as the island of Iona, off the western coast of Scotland. Landing here, Arculf enjoyed the hospitality of Adamnan, the Abbot of the Monastery of Hy, who received him all the more gladly when he found that his guest had personal acquaintance with the Holy Places of the East, and was ready to dictate his experiences. The worthy Abbot compiled from his notes a work entitled "Arculf's Narrative about the Holy Places," in three books. The first of these deals mainly with Jerusalem; the second with Palestine generally and with Alexandria; while the third describes Constantinople, and relates some incidents in the life of St. George the Confessor.

At Jerusalem Arculf saw many interesting things; and believed all that was said about them. The church built above the sepulchre of the Lord he describes as "very great, the whole of which is of stone, rising up from the foundations in three walls, which have one roof at a lofty elevation having a broad pathway between each wall and the next." Another church stood on the site of Calvary; side by side with one erected by Constantine, "as it is said, on that spot where the Cross of the Lord, which had been hidden away in the earth, was found with the other two crosses of the robbers, after a period of two hundred and thirty-three years, by the permission of the Lord Himself." The finder was the Empress Helena, mother of the Emperor. In a recess between these two buildings, Arculf saw the cup used at the Last Supper,—“of silver, holding the measure of a French quart, and having two little handles placed on it, one on each side”—also the sponge

THE MIRACULOUS NAPKIN

that was filled with vinegar, the spear with which the soldier pierced Christ's side, and the napkin which covered our Lord's head in the sepulchre. About this napkin a story was told on the testimony of several faithful dwellers at Jerusalem. Immediately after the Resurrection a certain believing Jew stole the napkin and secreted it. When on his death-bed, he called his two sons and offered them the choice between all his wealth and the napkin. The one chose the napkin, the other his father's possessions. But, marvellous to relate, the possessor of the napkin prospered so exceedingly that his poverty was soon changed into wealth; while ill-luck dogged his brother, and soon rendered him penniless. The precious cloth was handed down as an heirloom from generation to generation, until at last its possession was disputed by believers and disbelievers in its merits. The King of the Saracens, being appealed to by both parties to award it to one or the other, placed it in a fire lit in the public square, and called upon God to decide. "The fire could in no way touch it, for, rising whole and untouched from the fire, it began to fly on high, like a bird with outspread wings, and looking down from a great height upon the two contending parties, placed opposite one another as if they were two armies in battle array, it flew round in mid air for some moments; then, slowly descending, under the guidance of God, it inclined towards the part of the Christians, who meanwhile prayed earnestly to Christ, the Judge, and finally it settled in their bosom."

The napkin, Arculf mentions incidentally, was eight feet long.

THE PLACE OF ASCENSION

A quaint proof of the unscientific spirit of the time is seen in his reference to a certain pillar, set up on a spot where a dead youth was brought to life again by the cross of the Lord being held over him. At the summer solstice it cast no shadow,¹ thus showing, argues the Bishop, that Jerusalem is in the middle of the earth!

Our saintly pilgrim also saw in a church on Olivet the very marks made by our Lord's feet in the dust when He left the earth, in spite of the continual removal of the dust by pilgrims. It was found impossible to roof over this spot along with the rest of the area covered by the church, for a violent gale, springing up yearly on the anniversary of the Ascension, swept away any materials that might have been prepared for the construction of a vault above it.

During a journey through Palestine, Arculf visited Bethlehem, to see the manger in which our Lord lay, the tomb of David, and the graves of the Three Shepherds, to whom the angels appeared on the night of the Nativity. Near Hebron, once the metropolis of the Philistines, still flourished the oak under which Abraham entertained the angels; and amid the ruins of Jericho the house of Rahab had survived the general destruction. In a church at Gilgal were twelve large stones, six lying on the right side, six lying on the left—the very stones which twelve men, chosen from the twelve tribes, had at Joshua's order removed from the bed of the Jordan after the crossing of the river by the Israelites. A large cross marked the spot where John baptized Christ in the

¹ This could not be the case in the latitude of Jerusalem.

ALEXANDRIA

Jordan. A church covered the well of Samaria. And so on, wherever he goes, Arculf, like Silvia, has his holy curiosity duly satisfied. Apropos of the food of John the Baptist, he makes an interesting observation. "He saw, in that desert where John dwelt, a very small kind of locusts, the bodies of which are small and short like the finger of a hand, and which are easily captured in the grass, as their flight is short like the leap of light frogs; cooked in oil, they afford food for the poor." As to the *wild honey*, ". . . In that desert I saw some trees with broad round leaves which are of the colour of milk and have the taste of honey; they are naturally very fragile, and those who wish to eat them first rub them in their hands and then eat them. This wild honey is thus found in the woods."

The Bishop did not confine himself to Palestine; for we find him at Damascus, then in the lands of the Saracens, and in Alexandria, which he reached by sea from Joppa. The famous Egyptian port "lies like an enclosure between Egypt and the Great Sea, without a haven, difficult to approach from without." On an island commanding an entrance rose a huge tower, the Pharos, one of the seven wonders of the world. It was a square structure of marble, four hundred feet high, on the top of which beacon fires were kept burning at night to help mariners to steer their course through the dangerous narrows leading to the harbour.

The port itself, extending for thirty furlongs, was safely protected against the fiercest storms. "Nor," says Arculf, "are the safety and the size of the port undeservedly so



T. F. F. ANT OF THE EAST K. N. F. B. V. N. A. G. A. R.

CONSTANTINOPLE

great, since there must be borne into it whatever is needed for the use of the whole city."

Why Arculf visited Alexandria is uncertain ; but possibly he was drawn thither by the legend which connected the port with St. Mark. His sepulchre was shown before the altar of one of the many churches. During his residence in Egypt the Bishop often sailed on the Nile ; and so made acquaintance with the crocodiles, "very voracious, and so strong that one of them, if it can find a horse, or an ass, or an ox eating grass on the river bank, suddenly rushes out and attacks it, or even seizing one foot of the animal with its jaws drags it under the water, and completely devours the entire animal."

Crossing from Alexandria to Constantinople via Crete (where he stayed some days), Arculf found himself quite in his element. The magnificence of the town itself impressed him greatly, and so did the legend of its founding, which he is careful to relate at length. According to this, the city was begun originally on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus ; but, the tools having been miraculously transferred by night to the other side of the straits, Constantine ordered that the foundations should be dug where they were discovered. The most notable object at Constantinople was the True Cross, preserved in a chest in the Church of St. Sophia. Arculf says that he actually saw it, gives particulars of its shape and size, and mentions the wonderful fragrance proceeding from the chest in which it was kept. He introduces us also to George the Confessor, the national saint of England, in a series of interesting, if marvellous, narratives of his power. From Constanti-

HWEN TSANG

noble Arculf sailed to Rome. The passage from Rome to France was, as we have noticed, sadly delayed by a storm, to which is ultimately due the account of the Bishop's travels.

In many ways the information given by the Christian pilgrims is very meagre. Urged by one strong purpose—adoration of sacred spots and objects—they were content to follow the more or less beaten tracks which led from one to the other, and so were not explorers in the wider geographical sense. Their mental outlook on things may appear childish to us; their narratives may include much that we do not care to read, and omit much that might have been interesting. Yet we should not forget that during the period when pilgrimages were in vogue it was the pilgrims who kept the current of civilisation moving between East and West. And it is to them that we owe many of the pictures that we have of the East as it was in the three centuries preceding the rise of Mohammedanism.¹

THE CHINESE PILGRIM, HWEN TSANG

All religions have their pilgrims. The same spirit which carried Christians to Palestine takes the Moslem of to-day to Mecca, and the Hindoo to the banks of the Ganges. In the century when Arculf travelled eastwards, Hwen Tsang, one of the most famous, if not the most famous, of Chinese devotees, pushed south-westwards

¹ NOTE.—The author is indebted to the publications of the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society for much of the information included in this chapter.

HIS EARLY YEARS

through the Himalayas to India, in search of places made holy by their connexion with the life of Buddha. He penetrated countries visited by few, and even at the present time unexplored and virtually unknown to us. Though his journey was undertaken for religious purposes, he kept a minute and careful diary containing accurate descriptions of the regions which he passed through.

Hwen Tsang was born in China, A.D. 604, the youngest of a family of four sons. All were given a good education by their father; but Hwen soon outstripped his brothers in religious learning, and when only thirteen years old was admitted as novice to a Buddhist monastery. At that period China was in a state of chronic revolution; and Hwen ran considerable personal risks while travelling from one monastery to another to attend the lectures of the most learned professors of his faith. At the age of twenty years he received full religious orders. His virtue and learning already marked him out as an eminent theologian, from whom even his former teachers were not ashamed to receive instruction. Unfortunately for his peace of mind, he grew dissatisfied with the religious books, on account of certain discrepancies and omissions which no one could explain to him; so that by the time he was twenty-six he had resolved to realize a dream which came to his mother just before his birth, in which she saw her son, robed in white, journeying westwards in search of the Law.

Having vainly asked the king for permission to travel, Hwen started off alone to cross the frontier at the Yellow River, to a spot whence caravans left for India. The

CROSSING THE DESERT

sympathy of the officials helped him to get away unnoticed with a guide, who deserted him at the edge of the Desert of Gobi, and left him to make his way alone along a road marked only by bones and the imprint of hoofs. Presently the plain before him was filled with charging horsemen, well-armed and richly caparisoned. Every moment the scene changed ; and as he wondered, the forms vanished, leaving nothing but the empty desert. This mirage he naturally attributed to demons desirous of thwarting his pious intentions. Pressing on undaunted, he soon arrived at a solitary watch-tower, where the arrows of the wakeful warders nearly put an end to him while he watered his horse outside at night. But when he declared who he was, the officer in command, a zealous Buddhist, gave him shelter and advice, and sent him on his way with letters of introduction to the guardian of the fourth signal-tower. He passed the others successfully, but at Number Four he again narrowly escaped an arrow as he approached ; though the officer here also showed hospitality on learning his identity. Provided with food and water, he managed to avoid Tower Number Five, where he would certainly have been detained ; but had the misfortune to drop his water-bag. For five nights and five days he wandered about, tormented by sandstones, thirst, and the imaginary attacks of evil spirits, till he finally stumbled upon a lake and pasturage. This experience almost broke his determination. He returned some way towards China. Then, reviving his faith, he again set his face westwards, resolved to cross the dreadful desert or leave his bones in it.

A journey of a few days' duration brought him to a

ATTACKED BY BRIGANDS

Tartar kingdom, where he was welcomed with open arms at the first convent, and then by the king, who wished him to settle down as teacher of his people, and accompanied the request with rich gifts. Hwen had to oppose his will to that of the king. He threatened to starve himself if he was not allowed to proceed, and after three days' fasting got his way. From this point the poor, solitary, friendless young monk made a triumphal progress, escorted by troops of chiefs through whose territories he passed. The dangers of the journey were by no means surmounted, however. He had now to cross the Belur-'Tagh Mountains, thread the Jaxartes valley, and push across the wilds of Bactria and Kabulistan. His little caravan was attacked by brigands again and again, and suffered many perils during the passage of broad rivers and ice-covered passes amid severe snowstorms. Fourteen of his party died under these hardships.

Taking a bone-strewn track across another desert, Hwen reached Samarkand, the great trading depot of Central Asia, where the people, though highly civilized, were fire-worshippers. His stay in the town resulted in the conversion of the king and many of his subjects.

Another stiff spell of mountaineering brought him to the kingdom of the Toukhara, or White Huns, in the upper valley of the Oxus. At Balkh, in Bactria, he found many religious monuments, and large monasteries containing thousands of monks. Images of Buddha were numerous here, also towers built in his honour, sometimes single, sometimes in groups. As he approached India he had the good fortune to see, at this monastery or that,

HIS DOINGS IN INDIA

precious personal relics of Buddha—a hair, an eye-ball, a skull-bone, a finger-nail, his alms-dish, his sweeper's brush, a tooth, his staff, his washing-basin—all objects of the deepest reverence. Districts now waste and uncivilized are described by Hwen as covered with orchards full of pears, apricots, plums, peaches, grapes, oranges, and pomegranates. Besides these, fertile fields of wheat and millet; silver, gold, and copper mines; a special coinage, and garments beautifully woven of wool, cotton, and silk, testified to the luxury of the population. Hwen was often sent on his way in a chariot, and offered valuable parting gifts, which, as an ascetic, he refused, or presented to the Buddhist temples.

Hwen entered India by the Cabul route. Near Peshawar he visited a cave where Buddha was said to have converted the king of the dragons and to have left a luminous shadow of himself. The approach had an evil reputation as the scene of many acts of brigandage and murder, and presently Hwen encountered five bandits. He managed, however, to melt their hearts and reach the cavern, where, after a long series of prayers and invocations, he saw the miraculous shadow appear in dazzling splendour.

Once in India, Hwen settled down to a determined pursuit of the Law. He visited many shrines; stopped for months or years at monasteries to obtain further instruction in the Buddhist doctrines, and, where possible, copied out religious books. At the end of sixteen years of wandering in the peninsula he had amassed 520 volumes, besides numerous statues and relics of Buddha.

RETURNS TO CHINA

To see a spot stained with Buddha's blood he visited Kashmir, where he received a splendid welcome, as his fame was now well established. After a two years' residence he turned south again. While sailing down the Ganges his boat was attacked and captured by pirates, who selected Hwen from among the passengers as a fit person to constitute the yearly human sacrifice to their goddess Domga. A sudden storm which destroyed the pirates' boats so terrified his captors that they renounced their evil ways, were converted, and restored him all his goods.

Hwen returned to China by the way by which he had come. The once obscure monk now found himself overwhelmed with public honours. At the request of the Emperor he wrote the story of his travels, and also translated the precious Sanscrit manuscripts which he had collected at the cost of so great labour. He died in A.D. 664 in the odour of sanctity, after dividing all his possessions among the poor.

Many other Buddhist priests, both before and after Hwen Tsang, made the difficult journey to India. Shintao-an was contemporary with St. Silvia. Fa-hian travelled to India in 414. Hwai-Seng and Sung-Yun in 518-21. The *Biography of Fifty-six Religious Travellers*, published in A.D. 730, speaks for itself. The *Itinerary of Kihie* describes the experiences of a large body of monks who entered India in search of religious books, A.D. 964-76. ✓

"Never," says the Rev. S. Beale, in an introduction to his translation of *Voyages des Pèlerins Buddhistes*, "did more devoted pilgrims leave their native country to

DEVOTION OF CHINESE PILGRIMS

encounter the perils of travel in foreign and distant lands ; never did disciples more ardently desire to gaze on the sacred vestiges of their religions ; never did men endure greater sufferings by desert, mountain, and sea than these simple-minded, earnest Buddhist priests. And that such courage, religious devotion, and power of endurance should be exhibited by men so sluggish, as we think, in their very nature as the Chinese, is very surprising, and may perhaps arouse some consideration."

CHAPTER III

THE VIKINGS

The Dark Ages—Rise of Mohammedanism—What the Vikings did for Europe—Their three paths of exploration—Eastwards—Southwards—Westwards—Iceland discovered—First sight of Greenland—Eric the Red—Greenland colonized by him—Bjarni touches Labrador—Leif's voyage in A.D. 1000—Discovery of North America—Vines found—Thorvald's voyage—His death—Thorstein—Thorfinn Karlsefni—Freydis—A tragedy—Value of Viking exploration in the New World—Gradual decay of Greenland settlements.

THE Dark Ages of European history cover the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. During this period the gifts of civilization handed down by Rome to posterity were being trampled deeper and deeper into the mud of political, moral, and spiritual chaos; though now and then such men as Charlemagne and Alfred the Great made strenuous efforts to restore the spirit that had once animated Roman conqueror and missionary.

In the East, in the year A.D. 622, rose the star of Mohammed, the founder of Islam. His followers, counting death but the entrance to a sensual paradise, carried their arms through Africa into Spain, slaughtering and being slaughtered, but victorious. Christianity trembled before Mohammedanism, and at one time it indeed appeared as

THREE PATHS OF EXPLORATION

if the Koran would be imposed upon the whole of civilized Southern Europe, so disunited and degenerate had the Latin races become.

But salvation came from the northern heathens—the Vikings, “sons of the fiords,” daring sea-rovers, who in the eighth century began to turn their prows east, west, and north in search of fresh lands to conquer and settle. The Norwegian “dragons” were seen on the coasts of Britain, Scotland, Ireland, and of Europe from the Elbe to the Adriatic. When, in 872, King Harold Fairhair of Norway defeated his rebellious jarls in a decisive naval engagement at Hafursfiord, and so established himself as feudal lord of the whole western coast of Scandinavia, a strong impetus was given to further expansion, since there were among the vanquished many proud spirits who would not do homage to a superior.

Viking exploration and settlement now took three distinct tracks. One ran eastwards up the Baltic to Russia, and northwards to the White Sea. Norsemen penetrated as far as Novgorod—the “Holmgard” of the Sagas¹—and helped to lay the foundations of the Russian Empire.

The second, and most important, sea-path carried the long ships round the British coasts to France, where, in 922, Rolf the Ganger occupied Normandy—the land of the Northmen—won by treaty from Charles the Simple, which afterwards developed into the powerful dukedom of William the Conqueror. Other adventurers pressed further south to the Bay of Biscay, passed the Straits,

¹ Scandinavian epic poems relating the deeds of Norse heroes.

ERIC THE RED

and penetrated to Micklegard or Constantinople, where some took service with the Byzantine emperors and formed the famous Varangian Guard.

The third track, that with which this chapter is principally concerned, took the hardy Norsemen westwards into the storms of the North Atlantic. From the Orkneys the Vikings discovered the ~~Faroe~~ Faroe Islands, which led them on to the great Iceland, first sighted by Jarl Nadod in A.D. 860. Here an independent republic sprang up. Malcontent Norwegians flocked to it in their thousands, eager to escape the rule of a king, and soon had established a busy trade in wool, butter, hides, and oil with their native land and the British Isles.

In 878 one of the settlers, Gunniborn by name, was driven by the wind far west of Iceland to an unknown country, where he and his crew wintered among the ice. As soon as the spring freed them they returned to Iceland; but their adventure does not appear to have aroused any curiosity about this new land. One hundred years later, however, a leading Icelandic, Eric the Red, outlawed for manslaughter, determined to seek the coasts discovered by Gunniborn.

In company with a few followers Eric spent three years probing the shores of what he named *Greenland*, for a spot suitable for a home. One such was found not far from the modern Julienshaab, at the head of the Iguliko Fiord, a green oasis in the midst of the bleakest possible surroundings. The title which Eric gave to the whole region is about as misleading a one as he could have chosen; but then he wished to induce friends to settle

GREENLAND COLONIZED

near him, and he knew the value of a well-sounding adjective. On his return to Iceland to enlist settlers he met with a ready response. A colony was founded at Brattahlid, the first place chosen, and afterwards another at Godthaab, four hundred miles to the north-west.

So by the end of the tenth century the Vikings, who had infused fresh vigour into the Latin and Saxon races, and so were largely responsible for the social and spiritual revival of the eleventh and following centuries, had established themselves firmly in the polar country to the north of the New World.

It was only natural that accident or design should bring them into contact with North America. As in the case of Greenland, a storm was responsible for the interesting discoveries which we will now relate.

One of Eric's companions, Herjulf, had a son named Bjarni, who was, during a voyage to Greenland, caught in a fog, through which he sailed many days without being in any way able to direct his course. When at last the fog lifted he found himself off the coast of a country with well-wooded slopes, and none of the towering ice-covered crags so characteristic of the Greenland fiords. Either because he was a man of marvellously little curiosity, or because he wished to be back in Greenland for Yuletide, Bjarni did not so much as land on this strange shore, but at once turned his ship northwards. The phlegmatic colonists appeared to take as little interest as himself in his discovery. They had roved enough, and perhaps were too well content with their new home to trouble about the southern land—all except

LEIF'S VOYAGE IN A.D. 1000

Leif, son of Eric the Red, who had lately returned from a visit to Norway burning with zeal to convert his friends to the Christian faith, which he had received from Scandinavian missionaries.

On hearing of Bjarni's adventure, Leif went to him, bought a ship, and collected a crew of thirty-five sailors. In the autumn of A.D. 1000 he sailed from Brattahlid, steering due north. The ship soon made a sterile country, covered with big stones, which they named Helluland.¹ This was probably Labrador. Leif went ashore, and after satisfying himself that there was nothing there of value, pursued his course along the coast. Presently they reached another country, "cast anchor, pushed off a boat and went ashore." This land was flat and forest-clad, and the beach was low, and covered with white sand in many places." Leif said: "This land shall be named after its properties, and he called it Markland [Woodland]. They then went on board again as quickly as they could. They sailed thence out to sea with a north-east wind for two days before they saw land. They sailed towards it, and came to an island lying north of it, and went ashore in fine weather and looked round. They found dew on the grass, and touched it with their hands, and put it into their mouths, and it seemed to them that they had never tasted anything so sweet as this dew. Then they went on board and sailed into the channel, which was between the island and the cape, and ran north from the mainland. They passed the cape, sailing in a westerly direction. There the water was very shallow, and their

¹ Either "Slate-land" or "Ice-land."

DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA

ship went aground, and at ebb tide the sea was far out from the ship. But they were so anxious to get ashore that they could not wait till the high water reached their ship, and ran out on the beach where a river flowed from a lake. When the high water set their ship afloat they took the boat and rowed to the ship, and towed it up the river into the lake. They there cast anchor, and took their leather bags ashore, and there built booths. They resolved to stay there over winter, and there built large houses. There was no lack of salmon in the river and lake, and they were larger than any they had seen before. The land was so fertile that it seemed to them that no barns would be needed to keep fodder for the cattle during the winter, and the grass lost little of its freshness. The length of night and day was more equal than in Greenland or Iceland. . . . One evening it happened that they missed one of their men, Tyrker, the southerner. Leif upbraided his men harshly, and made ready to go and search for him with twelve men. A short way from the house Tyrker met them, and was welcomed back. Leif soon saw that his foster-father [Tyrker] was in high spirits. . . . Leif said to him, 'Why art thou so late, foster-father, and why hast thou parted from thy followers?' He [Tyrker] then spoke for a long time in Thyrska [some southern language] and rolled his eyes in many directions, and made wry faces. They did not understand what he said. After a while he spoke in the northern tongue, and said, 'I did not go much further than you, but I can tell you some news. I found a vine and grapes.' 'Is this true, foster-father?' Leif

THORVALD'S VOYAGE

asked. 'Certainly it is,' he answered, 'for I was born where there was neither lack of vine nor grapes.' They slept there that night, and in the morning Leif said to his sailors, 'Now we shall do two kinds of work—one day you shall gather grapes or cut vines, the other you shall fell trees, so that I may load my ship.' This they did, and their boat is said to have been filled with grapes, and a ship's load of timber was cut. When spring came they made ready and left, and Leif named the land after its fruits and called it *Vinland*."

Thus does the *Flateyar-bok*¹ describe the discovery of what evidently was North America, at a point calculated to lie somewhere between Cape Cod and Cape Ann, four hundred and ninety-two years before Columbus first sighted the West Indian islands. About the genuineness of the events recorded in the Saga of Eric the Red, as given in both *Hauks-bok* and *Flateyar-bok*, there can be little question.

Leif reached Greenland with his cargo of timber early in 1001. His brother, Thorvald, borrowed his ship next year, to fetch more timber, which in a treeless country was a very valuable commodity. He found Leif's huts in Vinland without much difficulty, and wintered in them. When spring came he determined to explore the coast, and while so doing the Norsemen came into conflict with some Skraelings, or Indians, who put out from a creek in their

¹ Compiled in 1387 by the priest Jon Thordharson. This is one of the two main authorities (the other being the *Hauks-bok* of 1334) from which we derive our information about the colonization of Greenland and the discovery of Vinland.

THORFINN KARLSEFNI

birch-bark canoes and furiously attacked the "dragon." During the fight Thorvald was pierced by an arrow, and he died as soon as the ship got to sea again.

In 1004 his other brother, Thorstein, set out to fetch his body from its grave on a lonely cape. But foul winds blew him into the Atlantic, and after tacking about the ocean uselessly all the summer he returned to Greenland without having sighted Vinland, to die of plague as soon as he landed.

There now comes into the story Thorfinn Karlsefni, a well-born Iceland colonist, who married Thorstein's widow, Gudrid. Urged by her to seek Vinland, he fitted out, in 1007, an expedition of four ships, to carry one hundred and sixty men, some women, and a large number of cattle, since serious colonization was now intended. They also found Leif's huts, "and good and plentiful provisions, for a large fine whale had been driven ashore. . . . Karlsefni had trees felled and cut for his ship, and spread them on a rock to dry them. They used all the produce of the land, grapes, and all kinds of fish and good things. After this first winter summer came, and they learnt of the presence of the Skraelings. A large host of men came out of the forest, near the place where the cattle were. The bull began to bellow very loudly, and the Skraelings were affrighted and fled with their burdens of grey furs and sables and all kinds of skins. They went to Karlsefni's house, and wanted to get in. Karlsefni had the door guarded. They understood not each other's speech, but presently the Skraelings untied their bundles and offered to barter the skins for weapons. These Karlsefni would

A TRAGEDY

not give, but told his women to carry out the produce of the cattle to them. When they saw it they wished to buy it alone. The bargaining ended in the Skraelings carrying off what they wanted in their stomachs, while the others kept the skins."

Soon after this Gudrid had a son, named Snorro, the first European born in the New World. Before he was three years old his father grew weary of the hostility of the Indians, who made constant attacks on the little settlement and decimated the Vikings. He accordingly loaded his ships with vines, wood, and furs, abandoned Vinland, and returned to Brattahlid. On the voyage, one of the ships, which had been riddled by worms, ~~sank~~ with the larger part of its crew.

A last attempt to found a colony was made by Freydis, a daughter of Red Eric, who took with her her husband Thorvard and two brothers, Helge and Finnboge, sixty-five men and a number of cattle. But quarrels broke out between Freydis and the brothers. She taunted Thorvard with reluctance to avenge her fancied wrongs, until, stung into action, he gathered his men and massacred the offenders together with all their followers, except five women, whom Freydis slew with her own hand, as the men refused to do so abominable a deed.

This tragic event ended all hopes of a permanent settlement. Freydis first bound her men to silence by dire threats of vengeance, and then ordered them into the larger of the two ships which had brought the company to Vinland. In 1018 the remnants of the ill-starred expedition sailed into Eric's Fiord, primed with a tale

VALUE OF VIKING EXPLORATION

that they had left the rest behind to carry on trade with the natives. But the real facts leaked out ; and to make certain that there had been foul play, Leif put some of the survivors to the torture, until they told the whole story. Great was his fury on learning the truth. "I have not the heart," he said, "to treat my wicked sister as she deserves : but this I will prophesy of her and Thorvard, that their posterity will never thrive."

Thus gloomily end the accounts of Norwegian exploration in North America. Like many of the subsequent attempts of English, Spaniards, and French in the Isthmus and the more southern parts of the American continent, these few efforts of the Norsemen were handicapped by the great distance of the points selected for colonization from the base of supplies, and the difficulty of making a colony self-supporting in a country where the colonists' attention had to be largely given to keeping a savage enemy at bay.

As regards practical results the Vinland settlements were as barren as the voyage of Hanno along the western coast of Africa. Nor did the Greenland settlements make any permanent contribution to the spread of European civilization. Partly, no doubt, from climatic changes, and partly through political interference with the trade between Greenland and Iceland, succeeding generations of colonists in the former country found it more and more difficult to make a living. Their numbers decreased to such an extent that the Esquimaux ventured to attack them in force. In 1349 the Godthaab settlement was wiped out ; and sixty years later a similar fate, so it is

DECAY OF SETTLEMENTS

believed, overtook the villages in Eric's Fiord. At any rate we have no records of the colony of later date than that year. To the north-west Norse expansion had run into a blind alley. But the hardihood with which it had been conducted, and the fact that it had actually brought Europeans into contact with the great New World beyond the Atlantic at a period when the south of Europe had lost all apparent desire for exploration and colonization, renders the deeds recorded in the Sagas all the more noteworthy. The discovery of America in the year A.D. 1000 by the Vikings in no way detracts from the fame of Columbus ; yet it must increase our admiration for the brave rovers who were true explorers as well as piratical freebooters.

CHAPTER IV

THE MISSIONARY FRIARS

Zenghis Khan—His conquests—Tartar invasion of Europe—The Pope sends an embassy to Batu—The Friars—John de Plano Carpini—Crosses the steppes—Reaches Court of Batu—Proceeds to Karakoran—Reception there—Returns to Rome—His advice to Christendom—King Louis the Ninth of France—William of Ruysbroeck—Crosses the Crimea—Tartar wheeled houses—Women's head-dress—Journey through Tartary—Yagatai's camp—Sartach—His reception of Rubruquis—Forced marches—Batu's camp—The court of the Great Khan—The Nestorians—Karakoran—A French goldsmith in Khan's employ—His masterpiece—Rubruquis returns to Europe.

ONE of the most striking episodes in human history is the rise of the Mongol or Tartar Empire during the thirteenth century.

Zenghis Khan, the greatest conqueror that the world has ever seen, was born on the banks of the River Onon, in Upper Mongolia, 1162. His father, chief of a petty Mongol tribe, died while Zenghis was but thirteen years old; and many of the tribesmen deserted to other chiefs. His mother, however, being a strong-minded woman, rallied the loyalists, and educated her son for leadership—a lesson which he readily learnt, for he succeeded in subduing all the neighbouring tribes and making himself Khan or Emperor of Northern Mongolia. In 1206 he

TARTAR INVASION OF EUROPE

swooped down on China and overran it with fire and sword. He then turned westwards with his mighty hordes of savage warriors, and swept resistlessly across Asia to the Volga, leaving ruin behind him. India was next invaded and ravaged as far as Delhi. At the time of his death, in 1227, practically the whole of Asia north of the Himalayas acknowledged his sovereignty.

Four of his sons divided the Tartar Empire between them, Okkatai assuming the chief place as Khan of Khans, with his capital at Cambaluc, afterwards named Peking. Okkatai consolidated his Chinese Empire, and then issued orders for a second invasion of Western Asia and the more easterly parts of Europe. A Tartar host of enormous proportions swept through Armenia and Syria, while another, under the command of Batu, Zenghis' grandson, reduced Russia and pushed on towards Hungary. Christendom trembled before the approach of this astounding flood of heathens, which no power seemed able to resist. Cracow was burned. The troops of Poland, Moravia, and Siberia, gathered under the leadership of Duke Henry, were scattered like chaff before the wind on the bloody field of Lignitz. The King of Hungary next saw his army destroyed. Pesth was sacked, and its inhabitants were massacred. In vain the Pope preached a holy war. It is impossible to imagine what fate would have befallen Europe if the death of Okkatai in 1241 had not suddenly recalled the Tartars from their work of destruction.

While Christendom was recovering from this terrific shock, news came that the Mongols were again on the

JOHN DE PLANO CARPINI

move westwards. Pope Innocent the Ninth, who appears to have shared the general belief that the Tartars, in spite of their ferocity, offered a promising field for the sowing of the Gospel, resolved to anticipate further invasion by sending an embassy to Batu, who now had his head-quarters on the Volga.

Though the mission was one from which the bravest might well have shrunk, volunteers were forthcoming in the persons of certain Franciscan and Dominican friars: "Tis worthy of the grateful remembrance of all Christian people," says Ricold of Montecroce, "that just at the time when God sent forth into the eastern parts of the world the Tartars to slay and be slain, He also sent forth in the west His faithful and blessed servants, Dominic and Francis, to enlighten, instruct, and build up in the Faith."¹ To these devoted missionaries we owe most of the information which we have about the manners and customs of the Mongol invaders.

Innocent selected as the most important member of his embassy John of Plano Carpini, in Perugia, a disciple of St. Francis. Associated with him was one Benedict, also a Franciscan. These two were ordered to make their way to the palace of the Great Khan in Mongolia, through Southern Russia. Four other friars had orders to travel simultaneously through Armenia, Persia, and Khorassan, with the same goal in view.

Early in 1245 Friar John started from Lyons. His feelings with regard to the expedition are thus described by him: "We personally dreaded from these Tartars

¹ *Cathay and the Way Thither*, I, cxxii.



THE PACI DISTRESS: THE STOUT MONKS

The Franciscan monk John de Pluma Carpini and his companions crossing Mongolia with a Tartar escort to the camp of the Great Khan at Karakorum. The natives, men, born horsemen, travelled day and night, hardly resting, even to take food. The distress of the corpulent, though, plucky Friar John during the forced marches nearly imagined.

PROCEEDS TO KARAKORAN

that we might be slain or reduced to perpetual slavery, or should suffer from hunger and thirst, the extreme of heat and cold, reproach and excessive fatigue, beyond our strength." His fears were no doubt aggravated by the narrative of an Englishman who had been captured while fighting for the Tartars, among whom he said he had lived some years before they invaded Europe. According to this adventurer, the Tartars ate the flesh of captives.

The invaders were far from being as black as they were painted. While crossing the steppes of Russia, John and his companion fell in with more than one roving Tartar band, who did not molest them, although they boldly affirmed that God was highly displeased with a nation which dared to decimate peoples that had done it no harm. In fact, the lesser khans helped the Dominicans forward from post to post; though, curiously enough, the whole country was marked by dismal piles of the skulls and bones of victims of the Tartar incursions.

At last they reached the Court of Batu, on the Volga. The Khan permitted them to rest there awhile, and then sent them on to the Great Khan's camp at Karakoran, in Northern Mongolia. The celerity of their escort's movements greatly distressed the brave but corpulent John. They travelled day and night, taking what food they could in the saddle, and often obliged to go without a meal at all for many hours at a stretch. Yet it required three and a half months of these forced marches to bring them to the Court of Kuyak Khan, Okkatai's successor.

They reached their destination in July, 1246, and found that they were by ~~no~~ means the only envoys come

RECEPTION AT KARAKORAN

to get an audience of the Khan, for a Russian duke and many Mohammedan ambassadors had already arrived, all bearing in their hands magnificent gifts, and dressed in a manner which emphasized the poverty of the monks' simple gowns.

John and his companion were hospitably received, given board and lodging, and treated with respect. The Khan graciously granted them an audience, at which they presented the letter entrusted to them by the Pope. The epistle was scarcely of a conciliatory character. "We are compelled to wonder," it said, "how you, having entered many Christian lands, have horribly desolated them, outraging every natural tie and sparing neither sex nor age"; and concluded by exhorting the Khan to repent and be converted.

A good many of the Christian princes of the day would have made the monks atone in person for their hardihood in submitting such a document. Kuyak, apparently respecting the cloth, or at least the qualities, of John and his envoy, contented himself with withdrawing the royal favour. The missionaries soon found themselves very short of the necessities of life, and it would have gone badly with them had not a Russian goldsmith come to their aid. The Khan's mother also had a soft heart, for when they received permission to leave the Court she gave them each a warm cloak and fox skins to guard them from the cold of the return journey, which was intense.

Some time in the autumn of 1247 the friars reached Rome and handed in the Khan's haughty reply to the Pope. As missionaries they had effected little, but as a

KING LOUIS THE NINTH

traveller John had kept his eyes open, so that he was able to write an interesting account of his adventures and observations. Carpini's narrative is straightforward and free from exaggeration. He draws a clear picture of the Tartars as unlike Europeans in personal appearance on account of their broad faces, flat noses, and small eyes. He is careful to distinguish between them and the Chinese, or Kitai, as he calls them, who, though somewhat resembling the Tartars in their facial features, are of a gentler and more industrious disposition. As the Tartars prided themselves upon the possession of flocks and herds, so the Chinese valued wine, gold, silk, and all the products of agriculture. "Their betters as craftsmen in every art practised by man are not to be found in the whole world."

The military strength of the Tartars Friar John estimates as irresistible by a disunited Christendom, and in a chapter, "How to resist the 'Tartars," he warns the Christian princes to organize their forces and to forget party differences in the face of a common danger.

Six years after the return of the Pope's envoys, King Louis the Ninth of France despatched another adventurous monk into the East, with instructions to seek Prester John, a more or less mythical Asiatic potentate who was supposed to be a stalwart champion of Christianity among the barbarous races of Eastern Turkestan and Mongolia. So shadowy was the personality of this king that, when travellers in Asia failed to discover any signs of him, his kingdom somehow or other was mysteriously transferred to Abyssinia.

CROSSES THE CRIMEA

The name of Louis' envoy was *William of Ruysbroeck*, a Fleming. He is more generally known under his Latinized name of Rubruquis, and we will therefore use that when referring to him here.

King Louis—Saint Louis, his people called him, on account of his zeal as a Crusader—enjoined upon Rubruquis that he should take special note of the nomadic races with whom he might come into contact.

Rubruquis left Constantinople in 1253, and sailed to Soldaia, in the Crimea. Here he and his two companions bought covered carts and horses for the long land journey through the Steppes and Tartary; and also hired an interpreter, who, as events proved, took less interest in his duties than in imbibing intoxicating liquors.

While travelling to the narrow neck which joins the Crimea to the mainland, they passed some castles on the seashore occupied by German-speaking Goths, who had here formed a small but interesting community. The neck was traversed by a deep ditch to stop the passage of animals and vehicles except at one place, where a custom-house had been erected. After passing this the mission soon came into contact with the Tartars, whose way of living filled Rubruquis with astonishment. Their chief possession being flocks and herds, the Tartars kept constantly on the move, seeking fresh pastures from month to month. But they were sufficiently civilized to appreciate the comforts of a home, and accordingly carried about with them large huts, built of wicker-work, mounted on wheels. The size of these movable dwellings surprised the Europeans. Some were so large that it took the

WOMEN'S HEAD-DRESS

united strength of a small herd of oxen to move them ; and the Friar states that one specimen in which he was particularly interested measured thirty two feet across. When a suitable place for encampment was reached, these huts could be moved bodily from their wheeled supports and set on the ground. The ladies' huts were, so we read, beautifully decorated, and the wagons tastefully designed.

Only less remarkable than their portable houses was the head-dress of the women, "light and hollow, being made of the bark of trees and other light material, from which rises a square, sharp spire more than a cubit long, fashioned like a pinnacle. It is covered with rich silk, and on the top of the spire they put a bunch of quills or slender canes, a cubit long and more, which they beautify at the top with peacocks' feathers, and round all the length thereof with the feathers of a mallard's tail, and with precious stones also. Hereupon, when a great company of such gentlewomen ride together, and are beheld afar off, they seem to be soldiers with helmets on their heads, carrying their lances upright ; for the said Botta (as the gear was called) appeareth like a helmet with a lance over it." No wonder that roomy quarters were needed for the ladies of the company !

According to Tartar ideas of beauty, the smaller and flatter a nose, the more shapely was it considered. In fact, Rubruquis accuses the belles of Tartar society of having artificially reduced this organ by the aid of the knife.

Our travellers journeyed for hundreds of miles over vast plains, where the horizon alone bounded the view, the

SARTACH

monotony of the journey broken only by the visits of importunate stray Tartars, who were ready to beg or steal anything that they could lay hands on. Though they did not take anything by force, their insistent mendicancy was a veritable plague. They regarded themselves as the lords of the universe, and therefore showed absolutely no gratitude for any gift that the friars were weak-minded enough to make: except in the shape of an occasional offering of sour buttermilk—very *sour*, Rubruquis is careful to add.

The first really large band of nomads encountered was that of the chief Yagatai. An interpreter at once came to ask what they could give this nobleman; and they had to return the unsatisfactory answer that, as monks sworn to vows of poverty, they carried no rich gifts with them. All they could muster in the way of a present was some dried fruits, some biscuits, and a flagon of sweet wine, which Yagatai forthwith distributed among his courtiers, who were themselves living on very short commons. They then resumed their way unmolested to the banks of the Don, and crossed the river at a point where it was as broad as the Seine.

Presently they stumbled into the camp of Sartach, Batu's son, travelling with all his wives and their numerous children, attendants, and treasure-carts, which suggested glorified chests-of-drawers mounted on wheels of sufficient height to keep them clear of the water when a ford had to be crossed. Again they were invited to make an offering, and again they had to plead their monastic poverty. Sartach received them courteously and gave

HIS RECEPTION OF RUBRUQUIS

them food ; and requested that they should put on their sacerdotal vestments and bring him the letter from King Louis with which they had been entrusted. "Putting on each precious ornament," says Rubruquis, "I took a rich cushion in my arms, and upon it the Bible I had from your Majesty, and the beautiful Psalter, adorned with rare paintings, which the queen bestowed upon me. My companions carried the missal and a crucifix ; and the clerk, clothed in his surplice, carried a censer in his hand. In this order we presented ourselves, and the felt hanging before the Lord's door being withdrawn, we appeared in his presence. The clerk and interpreter were ordered to make three prostrations ; but from this humiliation we, the monks, were excepted. We were, however, admonished to be exceedingly careful in going in and out of the Lord Sartach's dwelling, not to touch the threshold and his door ; and likewise we were desired to sing a Benedicite or prayer for their Lord, and accordingly we entered singing the *Salve Regina*." The Khan and his head wife examined the censer and Psalter curiously. The letter was handed over and translated. The gift of fruit, bread, and wine was accepted. Then Sartach dismissed the monks, who were glad to get away with their precious books. But alas ! the very next day a message came that they were to deliver up the vestments and books. Rubruquis hid the Bible and some other books which he valued most, and surrendered the rest, including the Psalter ; and when he found that Sartach's reputation for being a Christian was evidently a myth, he sought permission to proceed in search of Prester John.

FORCED MARCHES

They now had to leave their carts behind and travel as Carpini had done before them, at express speed on horseback. Death and starvation stared them in the face many times before they reached the camp of Batu, on the banks of the Volga. Rubruquis hardly knew which to marvel at the more—the number of the wheeled houses which stretched for leagues over the plain, or the breadth of the mighty Volga. This river he learned, and quite correctly, flowed into a lake of vast extent which had no outlet.

The stay in Batu's camp was marked by great hardships, as the Tartars gave the travellers no food. They therefore gladly got to horse again as soon as they were permitted to proceed, and struck off across the Siberian Steppes for the Court of the Great Khan, far away in Mongolia. Poor Father William was no horseman, and must have suffered untold discomfort in his efforts to keep up with his equestrian escort, who rode at top speed, leaving him to follow as best he might. To fall behind meant to be deserted; and to be deserted in the wilderness of Central Asia meant death by starvation. So the brave friar rode desperately, till he almost fell from his seat from sheer fatigue. Here and there the party fell in with a few Christians, mostly Nestorian heretics, who showed him kindness, and did what they could to soften the rigour of the journey.

Rubruquis, never forgetful of his holy office, lost no time in preaching Christianity. But unfortunately his addresses had to be translated by his interpreter, who, instead of passing on the words of the preacher, said whatever nonsense came first into his head—as Rubruquis dis-

COURT OF THE GREAT KHAN

covered when he could himself understand something of the language. Yet the Tartars were fond of being blessed, and appeared to have a respect for the Pope, whose name was known even in those remote regions. "But these Tartars thought that the Pope was like the Dalai Lama of Tibet, who never dies; or they had much the same notion as to the Pontiff's longevity that is said to have been entertained by certain Asiatics of our own day with regard to the age of the East India Company, which honourable body corporate they fancied to be one very old woman. Some of the Tartars asked Rubruquis if it were indeed true that the Pope was five hundred years old!"¹

After many hardships they reached the Court of the Great Khan, where to their astonishment they found a small chapel, with altar and ornaments. The Armenian monk who owned the chapel was a man of very broad views about religion, and took advantage of any festival to get very drunk; wherein he only imitated the many Nestorian priests of the country. These heretics were also quacks, who pretended to work miracles on the sick by the virtue of their holy water, which Rubruquis to his horror found to have had rhubarb mixed with it. The Nestorians were unable to see anything wrong in such an imposture; and when Rubruquis offered to bless some water according to the rites of the Roman Church, they persisted in their belief that water plus rhubarb was worth more than water plus some prayer said over it.

The spread of Nestorian Christianity is a subject full

¹ *The Romance of Travel*, I, 163.

THE NESTORIANS

of interest. The heresy of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, which had to do with the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, had been condemned by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, and had led to his banishment from Constantinople into the Arabian Desert, and subsequently into Upper Egypt, where he was probably murdered. But his doctrines obtained a large following in Persia, whence they spread into India, Turkestan, and China. Nestorian archbishoprics were founded at Herat and Samarkand. During the seventh century Christianity and Buddhism wrestled for the place of a national religion in China, and Buddhism triumphed. Christianity thenceforward gradually lost ground amongst the Chinese, and by the year A.D. 1000 had practically disappeared. A second wave of conversion swept across Asia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the track of Tartar conquests. Marco Polo found Nestorians numerous in Yarkand, Samarkand, Manchuria, and China proper. Soon after the middle of the fourteenth century the Mongol sway over China came to an end, and with it the tolerant attitude towards foreigners which characterized the Tartar khans. The true Chinese emperors adopted the policy of exclusion which has lasted till the present day. A second time Christianity languished; and when, one hundred and fifty years after the time of Ibn Batuta, Spanish and Portuguese explorers reached China by sea, all traces of Christian rites had disappeared.

We have made this short digression to show that many centuries ago Asia was more widely Christianized than

KARAKORAN

it is even to-day, a fact which may come as a surprise to many of our readers.

Rubruquis' treatment at the Court of the Great Khan Mangu, near Karakoran,¹ was much the same as that already experienced in the camps of Sartach and Batu. As he could not give anything, he received nothing from the royal table. Fortunately there was in the place a Christian woman, a native of Lorraine, captured by Batu's men when they overran Hungary, who did what she could for the friars. The weather turned cold—so cold that the Khan asked the good men to pray their God for its abatement—and decimated the Tartar flocks and herds.

The Khan therefore decided to go into winter quarters at Karakoran. Rubruquis he took with him. The Franciscan says of this Tartar capital that "it has two great streets in it, one of the Saracens where fairs are held, the other for the Chinese, who are all artificers." The Chinese, tributary to the Mongols, he describes as "little fellows, speaking through the nose, and, as is general among Eastern peoples, having narrow eyes." Their skill as workmen was already established. This proficiency was no doubt due to the fact that a son was obliged to follow his father's craft—a system of natural apprenticeship. The curious characteristic of the Chinese writing, that a single symbol represents a whole word, was noted by Rubruquis. No other medieval traveller appears to have discerned this peculiarity. His inquiries about Cathay brought out some stories which he could

¹ To the north of the Gobi Desert.

A FRENCH GOLDSMITH

not swallow, in spite of the credulousness of the age. "I do not believe a word of what they tell me as a fact, that beyond Cathay there is a certain province which if a man enters he never gets any older."

One of the most interesting personages mentioned in his narrative is a French goldsmith, who had somehow or other taken service with Mangu Khan. William Bouchler, or "William of Paris," was his name. This craftsman had secretly finished a piece of work which must have made even the Chinese jealous of his skill. Let us see how Rubruquis describes this marvel.

"In the Khan's palace, because it was unseemly to carry about bottles of milk and other drinks there, Master William made him a great silver tree, on the root whereof were four silver lions, having each one pipe, through which flowed pure cows' milk, and four other pipes were conveyed through the body of the tree unto the top thereof, and the tops spread back again downwards; and upon every one of them was a golden serpent, whose tails twined about the body of the tree. And one of these pipes ran with wine, another with caracosmos,¹ another with 'ball,' i.e. a drink made of honey, and another with drink made of rice. Between the pipes at the top of the tree he made an angel holding a trumpet, and under the tree a hollow vault, wherein a man might be hid; and a pipe ascends from this vault through the tree to the angel. He first made bellows, but they gave not wind enough. Without the palace walls there was a chamber wherein the several drinks were brought; and there were

¹ A drink made from fermented mare's milk.

HIS MASTERPIECE

servants there ready to pour them out when they heard the angel sounding the trumpet. And the boughs of the tree were of silver, and the leaves and the fruit. When, therefore, they want drink, the master butler crieth to the angel that he sound the trumpet. Then he hearing (who is hid in the vault), bloweth the pipe strongly, which goeth to the angel, and the angel sets his trumpet to his mouth and the trumpet soundeth very shrill. Then the servants hearing which are in the chamber, each of them poureth forthwith his drink into its proper pipe, and pipes pour them forthwith from above, and they are received below in vessels prepared for the purpose."

On Whit Sunday, 1254, Rubruquis was summoned into the Khan's presence and accused of calling the "King of Kings" a foul infidel. When the Franciscan denied the charge Mangu graciously declared his readiness to believe in his innocence, and ordered him to feed himself well for the return journey. Two weeks later the friars were entrusted with a long letter to Louis, given warm cloaks and some small presents, and ordered to depart forthwith. But Father Bartholomew of Cremona, Rubruquis' companion, was too ill to face the hardships of the road, and begged to be allowed to remain until he should be more fit to travel. This the Khan granted, and Rubruquis had to set off with only his rascally interpreter, one servant, and a Tartar guide. While crossing the desert he met Sartach; and further on, by the banks of the Volga, came upon Batu's camp. The fact that he had been to the Great Khan's palace, and bore letters from him,

RUBRUQUIS RETURNS TO EUROPE

secured him a kindlier reception by both chiefs. To his great delight, Batu restored part of the property which had been taken from him on his outward journey.

Late in 1255 Rubruquis reached Syria, and was at once commanded by his Father Superior to retire into the Franciscan convent at Acre, much as he longed to relate to Louis *viva voce* how he had fared on his mission. The Friar, obedient to the order, yet sent a letter to the King, much belittling his performances, and saying nothing of the hardships which they had entailed. Whether Rubruquis ever met Louis afterwards is not known; if he did not, his brave, uncomplaining endurance of two and a half years' travel in Asia received but sorry recompense.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF MARCO POLO

A sea-fight and what it led to—Marco Polo—His record as a traveller—His descent—The first journey made by his uncles to the Court of Kubla Khan—They return to Europe to ask the Pope for missionaries—Take Marco on their second journey—Delays—No missionaries forthcoming—Ormuz—The Persian Gulf—and Desert—Turkestan—Kashgar—Gobi Desert—Karakoran—The summer palace—Reception at Court—Marco's missions in the East—The Polos desire to return home—A lucky chance—They sail with the Lady Kokachin—Sumatra—India—Armenia—Arrive home, but are not recognized—How they established their identity—Marco captured in a sea-fight—Dictates his travels to a fellow-prisoner—His reputation among his countrymen—His accuracy in descriptions—Petroleum—Coal—Asbestos—Alligators—Rhinoceros—Kubla Khan—His system of posts—His palace—Pekin—Kansay—Chinese religion—Cremation—Polo's omissions.

ON September 6th, 1298, the Genoese and Venetian fleets fought a memorable action near the island of Curzola, off the Dalmatian shore. The Venetians were completely routed, and seven thousand of their number fell into the hands of the enemy.

This sea-fight is bound up with the history of early exploration. If it had not occurred, Marco Polo, a Venetian commander, would not have been carried as a prisoner to Genoa. If he had not been made prisoner, his famous travels would not have been recorded. If

MARCO POLO

those had not been recorded, we should have lost the most valuable chapter in medieval travel.

Marco Polo stands perhaps second only to Columbus among all the persons with whom we have to do in this volume. Ramusio, his biographer, indeed, sets Polo in the first place; but, if the importance of individual explorers' exploits are to be valued by the results, such a claim is hardly tenable. It is possible, however, that Polo's penetration of Asia from west to east, and the account which he gave of Cathay (China) and Zipangu (Japan) must have had considerable effect on Columbus's determination to seek the east coast of Asia across the Atlantic Ocean; and if this is the case Polo may have played a part indirectly in opening up the New World.

With regard to Asia there can be no doubt as to Polo's claim to priority. "All other travellers to that region are but stars of a low magnitude beside the full orb of Marco Polo." This is the verdict of Colonel Henry Yule, who speaks with the authority of many years of study of our traveller's narrative. In his fine commentary¹ he gives the following admirable summary of Marco's achievements:—

"He was the first traveller to trace a route across the whole longitude of Asia, naming and describing kingdom after kingdom which he had seen with his own eyes; the deserts of Persia; the flowering plateaux and wild gorges of Badakshan, the jade-bearing rivers of Khotan, the Mongolian Steppes, cradle of the power that had so lately threatened to swallow up Christendom, the new and

¹ *The Book of Ser Marco Polo.*

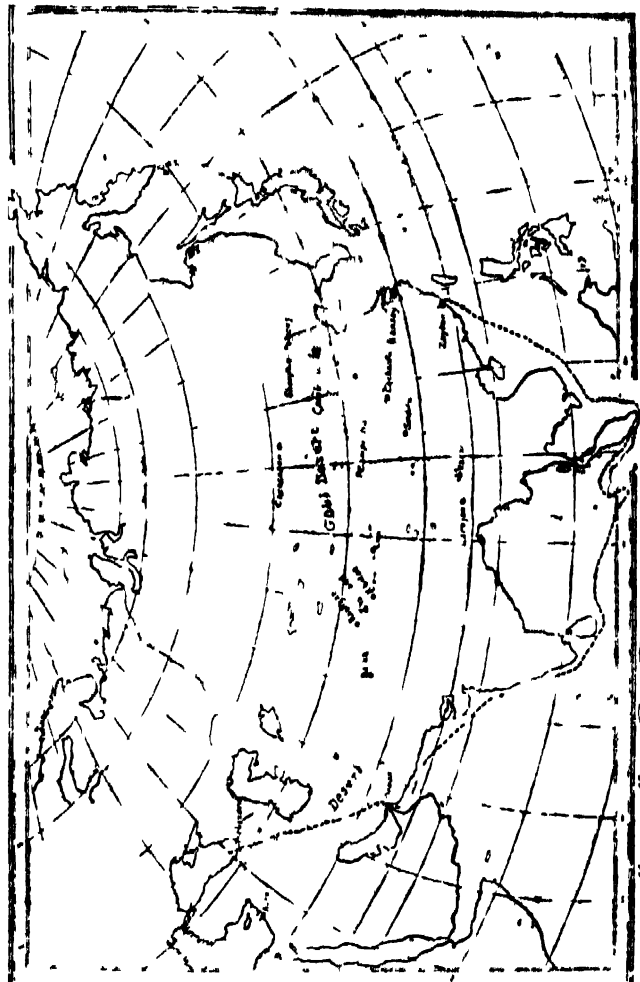


Chart 1 Map of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea ... Form 1 of 1

HIS RECORD AS A TRAVELLER

brilliant Court that had been established at Cambaluc ; the first traveller to reveal China in all its wealth and vastness, its mighty rivers, its huge cities, its rich manufactures, its swarming population, the inconceivably vast fleets that quickened its seas and its inland waters ; to tell us of the nations of its borders, with all their eccentricities of manners and worship : of Tibet with its sordid devotees ; of Burma with its golden pagodas and their tinkling crowns ; of Laos, of Siam, of Cochin China, of Japan, the Eastern Thule, with its rosy pearls and golden-roofed palaces ; the first to speak of the museum of beauty and wonder, still so imperfectly ransacked, the Indian Archipelago, source of those aromatics so highly prized, and whose origin was so dark ; of Java, the pearl of islands ; of Sumatra with its many kings, its strange costly products, and its cannibal races ; of the naked savages of Nicobar and Andaman ; of Ceylon, . . . of India the Great, not as a dreamland of Alexandrian fables, but as a country seen and partially explored ; the first in medieval times to give any distinct account of the secluded Christian empire of Abyssinia, and the semi-Christian island of Socotra ; to speak, though indeed dimly, of Zanzibar with its negroes and its ivory, and of the vast and distant Madagascar . . . ; and in a remotely opposite region, of Siberia and the Arctic Ocean."

Before mentioning in detail any of the sights which Polo saw and the remarks which he makes concerning them, it will be advisable to sketch briefly the circumstances which led to his travels and to give an outline of the route traversed.

HIS DESCENT

Marco Polo was the son of a Venetian noble, Nicolo Polo, who, with his brother Maffeo, left Venice in 1260 on a trading venture to the Crimea. The mercantile instinct carried them far north up the Volga, to the Court of Barka Khan, a grandson of Zenghis, who received them graciously. Unfortunately, a war broke out between him and another Tartar king, called Alan, and, their host being vanquished, the two Venetians thought it advisable to return home by a circuitous route, which brought them to Bokhara. Here they fell in with an embassy sent by Alan to Kubla Khan (the "Great Khan" of Polo's narrative) in Northern China, and were persuaded to travel with it to the Tartar Court. Kubla welcomed them, and after questioning them closely with regard to European religion, manners, and customs, expressed a wish that they should return to Europe, and hand to the Pope letters asking for the immediate despatch of a hundred men learned in the Christian religion, to convert the Tartar hordes which he ruled. Accordingly the brothers set out, armed with golden tablets which acted as passports throughout the Khan's dominions. On arriving at Acre in A.D. 1269, they learnt that the Pope (Clement the Fourth) had lately died, and that no successor had yet been appointed. A friend, Cardinal Theobald of Piacenza, Papal Legate in Acre, advised them to wait till the College of Cardinals had made a choice; and to fill in the time they made a visit to Venice, where Nicolo found that his wife was dead, and that his son Marco had grown into a fine lad, with the travelling instinct strongly developed.

They took fifteen-year-old Marco back with them to

THE FIRST JOURNEY

Acre. At the end of two years the papal throne was still vacant ; so, being unwilling to tarry longer, the Polos obtained from the Cardinal a letter setting forth the facts of the case, and turned their faces again to the east. Scarcely had they started when news came that their friend had been chosen Pope, under the title of Gregory the Tenth. Back to Acre they went to ask for the hundred able teachers. But Gregory could provide only two Dominicans, who soon lost heart and refused to leave Syria. If Kubla's request had been acceded to, it is possible that the Tartars might have become a Christian nation, a conversion which it is reasonable to believe would have greatly influenced the subsequent history of the world.

The three travellers pushed south-eastwards through Armenia and Persia to Bagdad, whence they took ship as far as Ormuz, intending no doubt to proceed to China by sea. But for some reason, on reaching the mouth of the Persian Gulf they turned northwards through Kerman and the Persian Desert to Damghan ; then due east through Khorassan and North Afghanistan over the Pamir, being greatly hindered, we read, by snow and floods. Descending into Eastern Turkestan, the Venetians passed Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan, to the city of Lop, crossed the Gobi Desert, and pushed on to Campichu. Before continuing their journey eastwards they appear to have made an expedition from Campichu, several hundred miles over the Gobi to the neighbourhood of Karakoran, "the first city that the Tartars possessed after they issued from their own country," then an important military centre with walls

MARCO A FAVOURITE

three miles in circuit, but now represented by only a few sand-swept ruins.

On their return to Campichu they resumed the easterly track, skirting the northern frontier of China above the Great Wall, and at the end of three and a half years' travel (i.e. in 1275) reached the Court of Kubla, then at Shangtu, the imperial summer palace in the Kinghan Mountains.

The Khan was delighted to see his old friends again. They handed over the Pope's letter and the holy oil which they had brought from the Lord's sepulchre at Jerusalem. The Khan then asked who Marco might be. "Master Nicolo answered that he was His Majesty's servant and his son. He entertained him with a friendly countenance, and taught him to write among other of his honourable courtiers; whereupon he was much esteemed of all the Court, and in a little space learned the customs of all the Tartars, and four different languages, being able to write and read them all."

Like Joseph in Egypt, Marco rose to great honour, and while still very young was sent on a mission to the south-east provinces of Shansi and Yunnan, and the easterly portions of Tibet. Marco was wise in his generation. He knew that his imperial master took a peculiar pleasure in learning of all sorts of marvels and customs to be found in his vast empire, and therefore made notes of everything which he thought worth recording. The lively narrative of these to Kubla resulted in further missions, which took him to Cochin China, Karakoran, and India. For three years he even held the important post of Governor of Yangchau.

THE GREAT KHAN DISPLEASED

Seventeen years of residence in China, during which the elder Polos had acquired considerable wealth, brought with them a desire to return home. Kubla was now an old man, and it is possible that the Polos feared that a successor might not treat them with the same consideration. But their request to be dismissed met with a firm refusal. "He asked why they would put themselves on such a dangerous journey, and if they wanted riches he would give them twice as much as they had, and out of pure affection would not permit their departure."

It so happened that at this juncture Arghan, Khan of Persia, Kubla's nephew, lost a favourite wife, who on her death-bed asked that her place should be taken by a princess of the Mongol tribe to which she belonged. Ambassadors presently arrived at Kubla's Court, seeking for such a bride, and the Lady Kokachin was chosen. The question now arose, How was she to be taken to Persia? An overland journey would be beset with many perils and much fatigue. On the other hand, if a sea voyage were made the alternative, there was no one among the Tartars capable of navigating a vessel to the Persian Gulf. Here was the Polos' chance. As Venetians they were all born sailors, and Marco had recent personal acquaintance with the sea-route at least as far as India. "Which reaching the cars of the ambassadors, they conferred with the Venetians and agreed that they, with the Queen, should go to the Great Khan and desire leave to return by sea and to have the three Latins, men skilled in sea affairs, with them, to the country of King Arghan. The Great Khan was much displeased with their request,

DEPARTURE FROM ZAYTON

yet upon hearing their petition granted it, and caused Nicolo, Maffeo, and Marco to come into his presence, and after much demonstration of his love would have them promise to return after they had spent some time in Christendom."

He then dismissed them with presents and letters to the chief princes of Europe, including the King of England.

Fourteen five-masted ships were prepared for the princess and her suite, who embarked at the port of Zayton (Chinchew) in the early part of 1292. The track of the tedious two-year voyage can be traced on the accompanying map, through the Malacca Straits, along the north coast of Sumatra, round the south of Ceylon, up the Malabar coast of India, and across the ocean to Ormuz. During the voyage many of the mariners and suite and two of the ambassadors died—one version gives the total number of deaths at six hundred—probably from scurvy and fever; and when at last the vessels reached their destination the survivors learnt that Arghan was dead. Kokachin consoled herself, however, by marrying Arghan's son, Chogan.

The Polos, after taking an affectionate farewell of their royal charge, struck overland through Persia and Armenia for Trebizond, where they took ship to Venice. As recorded by Ramusio, their experiences on their arrival in their native city recall the story of Ulysses. They had been absent twenty-four years, and if not actually forgotten by their relatives, had at least been given up for lost among wild Tartar tribes. When, therefore, these

AN INTERESTING FEAST

travel-stained men appeared and claimed to be the long-missing kinsmen, they were received with utter incredulity. The story of the manner in which they established their identity is sufficiently interesting to be repeated.

They made a sumptuous feast and invited thereto a number of their kindred. "When the hour for sitting down to table arrived they came forth from their chamber all three clothed in crimson satin, fashioned in long robes reaching to the ground, such as people in those days wore within doors. And when water for the hands had been served, and the guests were set, they took off these robes and put on others of crimson damask, whilst the first suits were by their orders cut up and divided among the servants. Then, after partaking of some of the dishes, they went out again and came back in robes of crimson velvet, and when they had again taken their seats, the second suits were divided as before. When dinner was over they did the like with the robes of velvet after they had put on dresses of the ordinary fashion worn by the rest of the company. The proceedings caused much wonderment and amazement among the guests. But when the cloth had been drawn and all the servants had been ordered to retire from the dining hall, Messer Marco, as the youngest of the three, rose from the table, and, going into another chamber, brought forth the three shabby dresses of coarse stuff which they had worn when they first arrived. Straightway they took sharp knives and began to rip up some of the seams and welts, and to take out from them jewels of the greatest value in vast quantities, such as rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, diamonds and emeralds, which had

MARCO'S REPUTATION

all been stitched up in those dresses in so artful a fashion that nobody could have suspected the fact."

To make a long story short, the sight of such wealth dispersed any remaining doubts on the part of the guests, and every one in the city was soon hastening to pay respects to the Polos.

Marco became an important person in Venice, and, as we have seen, paid the penalty by capture at the hands of the Genoese.

The story of his travels got abroad in Genoa. People crowded to the prison to hear the narrative from his own lips, and at last he grew so weary of relating his adventures that, at the suggestion of an imprisoned Pisan, by name Rusticiano, he dictated to him the account which has come down to us. So it was that the ill-wind of imprisonment blew good to that and succeeding generations of people who delight in the history of travel and exploration.

Poor Marco was eventually released, and returned to Venice. The city wags nicknamed him "Il Milione," the Man of Millions, no doubt because he used the word million so often in speaking of the Chinese population and the Khan's wealth.¹ In fact some of his contemporaries took him so little seriously that it is alleged that for many years after his death Venetian masques included a comic character who spun stiff yarns of a Munchausen-like flavour under the title of Marco Milione.

¹ On his death-bed Polo was asked by his friends to remove from his book all matter that they could not accept as facts, so that he might die with a good conscience. To which the traveller replied that he had not told one-half of what he had seen.

COAL

Polo died probably in the year 1324.

We may now turn to some of the most interesting points in his narrative, which is so impersonal, and in some places so inconsequent, that, were it not for a long prologue, it would be hard to decide how much of it is the result of personal observation.

Taken as a whole, Marco's notes, as they may fitly be called, are singularly free from any desire to exaggerate the marvellous. Here and there, when speaking from what is obviously hearsay evidence, he makes statements which may raise a smile, though it is by no means certain that he himself believes in the prodigies recorded. A good instance is the story of the miraculous pillar in a church at Samarkand, which lifted itself up in order that the Saracens might remove a stone on which it rested. He is careful to preface the story with the words "*It is reported.*"

His desire to speak the truth is best proved by the accuracy of his descriptions of many of the things which he notices as strange and novel. We may append a few examples.

Petroleum.—"On the north [of Armenia] is found a fountain from which a liquor like oil flows, which, though unprofitable for the seasoning of meat, is good for burning and for anointing camels afflicted with the mange. This oil flows constantly and copiously, so that camels are laden with it." Here we have the first record of the great rock-oil deposits at Baku.

Coal.—"Through the whole province of Cathay, certain black stones are dug from the mountains, which, put into

RHINOCEROS

spun and made into napkins." An excellent description of asbestos.

In the province of natural history Polo makes several very interesting observations.

The *Alligator*.—While travelling in Cochin China, Polo made acquaintance of "great serpents of such vast size that the very account of them must excite the wonderment of those who hear it. . . . You may be assured that some of them are ten paces in length; some are more and some less. . . . They have two forelegs near the head, but for foot nothing but a claw like the claw of a hawk or that of a lion. The head is very big, and the eyes are bigger than a great loaf of bread. The mouth is large enough to swallow a man whole, and is garnished with great teeth. In short, they are so fierce-looking and so hideously ugly that every man and beast must stand in fear and trembling of them." Except for the mistake as to the number of legs, Polo's description is very accurate. In a further note he lays special stress on the size of their tails, which, as every modern traveller who has come into contact with them knows, is a very formidable weapon of offence.

The *Rhinoceros*, or unicorn, of Sumatra, he thus describes:—"They are nearly as big as an elephant. They have hair like that of a buffalo, feet like those of an elephant, and a horn in the middle of the forehead, which is black and very thick. They do no mischief, however, with the horn, but with the tongue, for this is covered by very long and strange prickles. The head resembles that of a wild boar, and they carry it bent towards the ground.

ASBESTOS

the fire, burn like wood, and being kindled, preserve fire a long time, and if they be kindled in the evening they keep fire all the night." The immense coal deposits of China, especially in the provinces of Honan and Shansi, are such as to make the famous geologist Baron Richt-hofen predict an eventual transfer of the world's great manufacturing industries to China. The deposits in southern Shansi alone he estimates as being sufficient to supply the world for several thousand years. Even in Marco's time the Chinese, rich and poor, had learnt the value of "black diamonds."

Asbestos.—While discoursing about Dsungaria, Polo says: "And you must know that in the mountain there is a substance from which Salamander is made. The real truth is that the Salamander is no beast as they allege in our part of the world, but is a substance found in the earth. Everybody must be aware that it can be no animal's nature to live in fire, seeing that every animal is composed of all the four elements. Now I, Marco Polo, had a Turkish acquaintance who related how he had lived three years in that region on behalf of the Great Khan, in order to procure those Salamanders for him. He said that the way they got them was by digging in that mountain till they found a certain vein. The substance of this vein was then taken and crushed, and when so treated it divides, as it were, into fibres of wool, which they set forth to dry. When dry, these fibres were pounded in a copper mortar and then washed, so as to remove all the earth and to leave only the fibres like fibres of wool. These were then

AN IMPOSTURE

They delight much to abide in slime and mud." Here a little imagination is mixed with the truth. To this day the Malays call the Sumatra species the *Buffalo* Rhinoceros, on account of its hair, which distinguishes it from the hairless pachyderms of the continent. As Polo evidently writes from personal observation, it is curious that he should have failed to notice the fact that the Sumatra rhinoceros is also peculiar for its *two* horns. He was not a careless¹ or credulous observer, for he saw through a fraud practised by the islanders on merchants. "When people bring home pygmies which they allege to come from India, it is nothing but an imposture. For the pygmies are manufactured in this island [Sumatra] as follows:—There is on the island a very small monkey, having a face like a man. These they catch, and pull out all the hair except that of the beard and on the breast, and stuff them and paint them with yellow dye to look like men."

More valuable, perhaps, than his notes on minerals and animals are Polo's descriptions of Chinese and Tartar social habits and the nature of the towns in which they live. Before touching upon this topic we should glance for a moment at the personality of the Khan who was the magnet that drew Polo to the East. "He is of a good stature, neither tall nor short, but of a middle height. He has a becoming amount of

¹ While crossing the Pamir, he noticed that "if fire be kindled there, it is not so effectual to boil anything as in other places"—i.e. the boiling-point of water sinks as the altitude above sea-level increases, and therefore the water becomes "less effectual" for cooking purposes. This phenomenon is now made scientific use of to calculate the height of mountains.

SYSTEM OF POSTS

flesh, and is very shapely in all his limbs. His complexion is white and red, the eyes black and fine, the nose well formed and well set on." Kubla, as his invitation to the Pope shows, was a man of broad mind. He thought of things more essential to a nation than indiscriminate slaughter of neighbouring peoples. Like the Incas of Peru, he instituted horse and foot posts, which transmitted letters and goods at an astonishing speed.¹ For the convenience of the public he built caravanserais on the high roads leading to Cambaluc at intervals of twenty-five miles, provided with beds and food, the latter supplied in mountainous districts by persons settled round the post-houses for the purpose of growing crops. His care of agriculture would have done credit to a more civilized government. To use Polo's own words: "He sends yearly to the divers provinces of the Empire to inquire whether any harm be done to the corn by tempests, locusts, worms, or other means; and when he is notified of damage in any province or city, he remits tribute there for the year, sending corn for food and seed from his own granaries; for in a time of abundance the Khan buys much corn and keeps it with great care against when there happens to be scarcity of corn in any province." The roadsides were planted with trees to shelter travellers, and where the track led through a desert stone pillars marked it out. The most splendid extant monument of his energy is the Grand Canal, which extends (including the river portions) from Pekin to Chinchew. It served as a means of com-

- Polo mentions transport of fruits from Pekin to the Palace at Shangtu (two hundred miles north) in thirty-six hours.

PEKIN

munication between the capital and the rice-growing districts round the estuary of the Yang-tse-kiang.

Polo was particularly impressed by the size and grandeur of the Khan's Palace at Shangtu, and its adjoining park, five miles square, enclosed by walls, to provide the Khan with the pleasures of the chase. The place is now marked only by a few ruins.

The Winter Palace,¹ that in Cambaluc, or Peking, was even more magnificent—"the greatest that hath been seen. It hath no upper story, but a very high roof; the walls are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with carved dragons, soldiers, birds, beasts of divers kinds, and histories of wars. The hall is so large that it could easily dine six thousand people. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth can design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof is coloured with vermilion and yellow, and green, and blue, and other dyes, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite that they shine like crystal, and lend a resplendent lustre to the Palace as seen from a great way round. Surrounding the Palace are parks well stocked with game of all kinds." A lake to the north-west provided the royal household with fish; while for pleasant exercise an artificial mound rose due north, "a mile in compass and a hundred paces in height."

The city of Cambaluc is described as being six miles square, though¹ at that time it was of oblong shape. After the expulsion of the Mongols by the Chinese in 1368 the Tartar town was shortened to a square and a

¹ Plundered by the Allies after the relief of the Embassies, 1901.

KANSAY

new Chinese city built contiguously on the south side. Polo somewhat overestimates the dimensions, but is correct in giving the height of the walls as about forty-five feet.

At a certain hour in the evening a great bell was tolled as a signal to all citizens to go indoors and stay there. Any one found roaming the streets after the curfew had rung was liable to a severe beating and imprisonment. Strangers had apparently to live outside the walls in the suburbs, of which there were twelve, each opposite one of the gates of the city.

The city of Kansay (modern Hanchow) receives a much fuller notice than even the capital. Its size, populousness, and beauty appear to have made a deep impression on the Venetian's mind. Kansay, he tells us, signifies "the City of Heaven"; and he pronounces it the finest and noblest in the world. Possibly its resemblance to Venice—"the whole city stands, as it were, in the water and surrounded by the water, so that a great many bridges are required to give free passage about it"—prejudiced him in its favour. He quotes from a Chinese document to the effect that the town had no fewer than twelve thousand bridges of stone, all lofty enough to permit the passage of a masted ship; that it had a compass of one hundred miles; that it contained a lake of thirty miles round; and that the craftsmen of the city alone occupied twelve thousand houses containing each upwards of forty souls. Among other luxuries Kansay boasted three thousand hot baths, each large enough for one hundred persons to bathe together. Polo puts the total number of the houses at 1,600,000, including a great number of large palaces.

CHINESE RELIGION

Though we may imagine that he has probably unintentionally exaggerated the figures here, there can be no doubt as to the enormous extent of the city at that period. We have to remember that in medieval Europe the population and dimensions of the capitals were very small compared with those of to-day ; so that the teeming multitudes of vast centres of China would appeal all the more forcibly to a Western traveller, and perhaps lead him to overshoot the number.

Of the religion of the Chinese, Polo says : " Each has a tablet fixed high up on the wall of his chamber, on which is inscribed a name which represents the Most High and Heavenly God ; and before this they pay daily worship—praying Him to grant them health of mind and body ; but of Him they ask naught else. And below on the ground there is a figure which they call Natagay, the god of terrestrial things. To him they give a wife and children, . . . and of him they ask seasonable weather and the fruits of the world, children, and so forth."

"They hold the soul to be immortal, and when a man dies he enters into another body, better or worse, according to the merits of the former life ; as of a poor man to become a gentleman, and after a lord or prince, and so higher until it be absorbed in God ; and if it have ill deserved, to be a poorer man, afterwards a dog, always descending to the lowest rank in baseness."

Cremation was in Polo's time general among Tartars and Chinese ; and also the custom of burning with the body paper representations of property which might be

CREMATION

useful in a future existence. "When they come to the place where the body is to be burned, they diligently and curiously paint on paper made of the bark of trees the images of men and women, houses, camels, money, and garments, which are burned together with the dead body; for they say that dead men shall have so many men-servants and maid-servants, cattle and money, in another life, as pictures were burned with him, and shall perpetually live in that honour and riches."

In this manner the living were able to send their dead well furnished into the next world at very little cost to themselves—so very Chinese in its economy.

The money of the country was paper. "They take the middle bark from the mulberry tree, and this they make firm, and cut into divers round pieces, great and little, and imprint the King's name thereon. The King makes a great mass of this paper money in the city of Cambaluc, enough for the whole empire, and no one under pain of death may coin any other, or spend any other, or refuse it as payment in all the kingdoms and countries."

We can easily understand after reading this why Kubla's wealth was so immense.

It is curious that, having come so near to the subject, Polo should make no reference to the writing and printed books of the Chinese, which contemporary travellers have specially noticed. Among other surprising omissions we may include his failure to mention the Great Wall; the use of tea; the small feet of Chinese ladies; cormorant fishing; and artificial incubation; all of which must

POLO'S OMISSIONS

have come under his observation. Yet their absence should not be considered to detract from the value of a narrative which is a mine of information, succinctly and generally accurately recorded. Were the book of but half its actual length it would still suffice to give Marco Polo a claim to the title of "prince of medieval travellers."

CHAPTER VI

THE FRIAR ODORIC

A born rover—His motive for travelling in Asia—His book—Sir John Mandeville's debt to him—Travels overland from the Black Sea to Ormuz—There takes ship to India—The miracles performed by the bones of four friars—Pepper—A notable image—Sumatra—Java—Bornco—A wonderful tortoise—China—To Prester John's country—The first European to enter Tibet—The Terrible Valley of Death—What does it mean?—Odoric's death—Miraculous powers of his remains—Funeral of Odoric.

NO summary of early exploration could well exclude the famous monkish traveller, Odoric of Pordenone, an Italian by birth and a Franciscan friar by choice. Marco Polo alone excepted, he probably travelled further and saw more of foreign countries than did any other European of the Middle Ages.

There is no evidence to show that, like Plani Carpini and Rubruquis, he was sent on any particular mission to the East. A naturally roving disposition was probably responsible for his sixteen years' absence from Italy among Asiatics of many races and creeds. Legend credits him with having preached the Gospel to such good effect that he won twenty thousand Saracens for the Church of Christ; but from his own writings we are unable to gather any proof that he ever played the part of missionary, though

HIS BOOK

he opens the first chapter with the declaration that "I crossed the sea and visited the countries of the unbelievers in order to win some harvest of souls." His staff and his monastic habit he took with him as the best of passports in lands where the servant of religion was always treated with respect; and the sight of them secured him hospitable welcome wherever he came into contact with a Christian settlement.

Odoric's book—written at his dictation after his return to Italy—is unfortunately incomplete; or at any rate ends very abruptly, while he is still describing Central Asia. His style, or rather that of the worthy William of Solagna, who "did" him into Latin, is not of a high class, nor is his narrative well ordered or discriminating. He indulges in weird stories, at second hand, and relates some startling personal adventures which raise a smile of incredulity; yet many of his observations show that he was honestly desirous of acquainting his readers with things which actually had an existence. Several interesting facts which escaped the keen-eyed Polo are told by him of the Chinese: their fishing with cormorants; the compressed feet of their high-born ladies; and their long finger-nails. Sir John Mandeville, that prince of long-bowmen, flattered him to the extent of borrowing wholesale from his adventures, and appropriating many of his statements as his own, though he had not travelled in the Far East; and he was not above throwing out hints that he had journeyed in company with the Friar! It is extraordinary that Samuel Purchas, a compiler of works on travel and discovery (1577-1626) should accuse Odoric of

TAKES SHIP TO INDIA

having stolen *his* descriptions from the English knight; when there is evidence to show that Mandeville laid not only Odoric, but also John de Plano Carpini, Hayton of Armenia, and Pliny, under contribution!

Odoric left Venice in the year 1316. Sailing to Trebizond on the Black Sea, he journeyed overland to Ormuz, through Erzeroum, Tabriz, Yezd, Persepolis, Shiraz, and Bagdad. Of the Persian Desert, which he calls the Sea of Sand, we have the following description: "It is all of dry sand without the slightest moisture. And it shifteth as the sea doth when in storm, now hither, now thither, and as it shifteth it maketh waves in like manner as the sea doth; so that countless people travelling thereon have been overwhelmed and drowned and buried in those sands. For when blown about and buffeted by the winds, they are raised into hills, now in this place now in that, according as the wind chanceth to blow." Near the desert he saw the ruins of Persepolis, "which formerly was a great city, and in the olden time did great scathe to the Romans. The compass of its walls is a good fifty miles, and there be therein palaces yet standing entire, and without inhabitants." Almost the same description might be given of these magnificent ruins to-day.

At Ormuz the Friar entered a ship constructed without the use of iron: its planks being stitched together with tough twine. In this he reached Bombay, where he notices black lions, bats as big as pigeons, and rats as large as small dogs. Some time before his arrival four friars had been murdered by the infidels. Odoric got

PEPPER

possession of their bones, and carried them away with him in order to bury them in holy ground. According to our traveller, this pious act brought its own reward. For one night, as he slept with the precious relics under his head, the Saracens set fire to the house to demolish him. "And I took the bones of the brethren, and seeking help from God, I crouched into the corner of the burning house. And three corners thereof were consumed, and then one only was left in which I was abiding. And as long as I continued there with the bones, the fire never came lower, but hung over me like an atmosphere. But as soon as I quitted the house it was entirely destroyed, and many others adjoining besides. And so I escaped scatheless."

The bones could command the winds as well as control the flames. While sailing from Bombay to Quilon (at the southern end of the Malabar coast) the wind suddenly failed. The native sailors in vain besought their gods to grant a breeze; nor were the prayers of the Saracens more efficacious. When, however, Odoric's servant cast a sacred bone from the prow of the ship, a most favourable wind arose, and never failed till it had brought them safely into harbour.

The pepper "forests" of the Malabar coasts receive special notice. In the Middle Ages pepper was valued very highly, and commanded such prices as to constitute one of the chief inducements which led the Portuguese explorers to the East. The description given by Odoric of its cultivation is so correct that it may be quoted for the edification of readers who know little about the antecedents of this condiment: "First, then, it groweth on plants

A NOTABLE IMAGE

which have leaves like ivy, and these are planted against tall trees as our vines are here [in Italy] and bear fruit just like branches of grapes; and this fruit is borne in such quantities that they seem like to break under it. And when the fruit is ripe it is a green colour, and 'tis gathered just as grapes are gathered at the vintage, and then put in the sun to dry."

Somewhere on the Coromandel coast Odoric found a church in which lay the body of St. Thomas the Apostle. This statement clashes with the supposed burial of the saint at Edessa as recorded by Silvia of Aquitaine.¹ But religious legends are elastic. We are sorry to read that "his church is filled with idols." The Christian creed had at this period become very much degraded in the East by the admixture of heathen rites.

In the same district was an image of Buddha, "entirely of gold, seated on a great throne, which is also of gold. And round its neck it hath a collar of gems of immense value. And the church of this idol is also of pure gold, roof and pavement. People come to say their prayers to the idol from great distances, just as Christian folk go from far on pilgrimage to St. Peter's. And the manner of those who come is this: Some travel with a halter round their necks; others with a knife stuck in the arm, which they never move until they arrive before the idol, so that the arm is then all in a slough. And some have quite a different way of doing. For these as they start from their houses take three steps, and at the fourth they

¹ "The martyr-memorial of St. Thomas the Apostle at Edessa, where his *whole body* is laid."

BORNEO

make a prostration at full length upon the ground. And then they take a thurible and incense the whole length of the prostration. And thus they do continually until they reach the idol, so that sometimes when they go through this operation it taketh them a very great while before they reach the idol. But when those who are going along in this way wish to turn and to do anything, they make a mark there to show how far they have gone, and so they continue until they reach the idol." Odoric here describes very faithfully a well-known penance still practised by Buddhists in India.

From India the Friar passed along the coasts of Sumatra (which he, first of Europeans, names correctly) and Java. In the former country then lived a race who ate human flesh "like we eat beef here," and readily bought children from the traders engaged in a horrible traffic. Of Java he speaks with enthusiasm as very rich and productive. The king, powerful enough to brave successfully the Great Khan himself, owned a palace such as Solomon might have envied. The approach to it had alternate stairs of gold and silver. Inside, the walls were plated with the same precious metals and decorated with the figures of Buddhist saints, their heads surrounded by halos set with gems. "To speak briefly," says Odoric, "this palace is richer and finer than any existing at this day in the world."

He also probably visited Borneo, if the country named Panten be that huge island. He tells us of the sago palm and the bread made from the pith, and of bamboos and rattans. The former attained one hundred feet in

CHINA

length, and the roots of a single rattan plant extended, he declares, "for a good mile." This last statement surpasses the truth, though if he had said one-quarter of a mile he would not have exaggerated. He gives even greater play to his fancy when he speaks of a tortoise which he saw in Cochin China, "bigger in compass than the dome of St. Anthony's Church in Padua"! And then he naively adds, "and many other things there be, which unless they were seen would be past belief: so I do not care to write of them." Odoric's attitude is hard to understand; for, when speaking of a certain pool in Ceylon said to have originated from tears shed by Adam and Eve over the death of Abel, he says that he does not believe it, as he noticed a spring which fed the pool. At one moment he makes most extraordinary statements about his personal experiences, and the next scoffs at the no less incredible information given by other people.

We need not follow in detail Odoric's travels in China, as he repeats much that has already been noticed in our previous chapter on Marco Polo. But we may view with his eyes some cormorants fishing for their Chinese master. "I saw in his boats water-fowl tied to perches, which he bound round the throat with a cord, so that when they dived and caught fish they could not swallow them. He then placed in a boat three great boxes, one at each end and a third in the middle. After doing this he released the fowl, and they kept diving and catching ever so many fish, which he placed in the chests aforesaid, so that in less than an hour they were all full. And when they were full he removed the cords from their

FIRST EUROPEAN TO ENTER TIBET

necks, and allowed them to dive and feed themselves on fish, till they were sated, when they returned of their own accord to be tied up as they were at first."

Odoric went to Kansay, and, like Polo, was much impressed with its size and beautiful situation. His account being practically the same as that of the Venetian, we need not expatiate on it. From Kansay he sailed up the Grand Canal, a work recently finished, to the Hoang-Ho. At Cambaluc (Pekin) he marvels at the palace, the Khan's Court, the order of his travelling and hunting, his feasts, and the general magnificence which surrounded the Lord of the Earth.

From China the venturesome monk journeyed westwards to the land of Prester John, that mythical person about whom Odoric himself had doubts, though he readily accepts an account of melons which when ripe burst and revealed a lamb-like creature inside, "just as there be trees in Ireland which produce birds." We cannot from his account localize John's kingdom, but as in his next chapter he speaks of Tibet we may assume that it was in the Yunnan direction. His visit to the country of the Lamas is particularly interesting as the first made by a European of which we have any record. "I came to a great realm, named Tibet, on the very borders of India. The whole kingdom is subject to the Great Khan, and therein is a greater plenty of bread and wine than there is elsewhere in the world. The people of that district live in tents made of black felt. The royal and principal city has black and white walls throughout, and all its ways are very well paved. In

TERRIBLE VALLEY OF DEATH

this city nobody dares shed the blood of any man or beast, on account of the reverence paid to an idol worshipped there. In the city lives the Abassi, which in their language means Pope. He is the head of all the idolaters, on whom he bestows all the benefices such as they have." We may pass over Odoric's version of the well-worn tale of the Old Man of the Mountain, and conclude with what he evidently considers to be his trump card—his adventures in the Terrible Valley.

"When I was journeying through a valley situate near the River of Delights, I saw therein an innumerable number of corpses; and also heard many kinds of music, especially of nakers,¹ which were beaten in an extraordinary manner. Such was the uproar that a very great fear fell upon me. This valley is about seven or eight miles long, and if an unbeliever enters it he never gets out, but forthwith dies. Although all thus perish therein, I wished to enter to see what this thing really was. So when I had entered the valley I saw, as I mentioned above, so many corpses that their number would seem incredible if one had not actually seen them. On one side of this valley, on the rock itself, I saw a very awful face of a man, so terrible that I thought my spirit would die through excessive fear. Wherefore I kept repeating 'The Word was made flesh.' I did not dare to come quite close to the face itself, but I was not more than seven or eight paces distant from it. . . . I reached the other end of the valley and then climbed a sandy mountain. Looking round in

¹ Kettledrums (?).

ODORIC'S DEATH

all directions I saw nothing, and heard only the nakers which were being so wondrously beaten. On the very crest of the mountain I discerned great quantities of what seemed like fishes' scales in silver, and placed some in my bosom. And because I cared not at all for them I (afterwards) threw them all on to the earth again. And so by the grace of God I came forth uninjured. Then all the Saracens, learning of this, showed me great reverence, declaring that I was baptized and holy : whereas those who had perished in the valley they declared to be the creatures of Satan."

There is something about this account which reminds one of the passage of Christian through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as depicted by Bunyan. We have against Odoric his assertion about the tortoise seen in Cochin China ; and to his credit many exact descriptions of things hitherto strange to him. What ought we to make of this tale ? Is he deliberately imposing upon us ? It may appear so at first sight : though on a further examination the difficulty is lessened if we remember that rock sculptures were common in Central Asia ; and that strange noises—probably caused by moving sand—have been heard in the desert by modern travellers. Bones are a sad, but common, sight beside any caravan track. So we think that Odoric may here be acquitted of any intention to deceive his readers.

Of his journeys after he left Tibet we know nothing. He reached Friuli, his birthplace and home, in 1220 ; and died at Udine the following year, while on his way to visit the Pope. His long travels, and his reputation for

FUNERAL OF ODORIC

having worked wonders of conversion among the heathen, brought a crowd of admirers to his funeral. People jostled one another in their eagerness to kiss the hands and feet of the corpse, or possess themselves of a fragment of his clothing.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRAVELS OF AN ADVENTUROUS MOOR

Ibn Batuta—From Tangiers to Cairo—Mecca—Persia—Mecca again—Voyage along east coast of Africa—South Arabia—The betel tree—Cocoa-nuts—Asia Minor—South Russia—Constantinople—Astrachan—Crosses Pamirs to India—*Suttee*—Enters service of King of Delhi—Barbarities of the King—Batuta in trouble—Pardoned and sent on a mission to China—Junks wrecked—Batuta goes to Maldiv Islands—Ceylon—A monkey story—Adam's Peak—Journey through Archipelago to China—Lands at Chinchew—Chinese care of travellers—Chinese jugglers—Returns to Morocco—Travels in Spain and Africa—Reaches the Niger—The huge mileage of Batuta's wanderings—His character.

IN the same year that the great Marco Polo died (A.D. 1324) another traveller of almost equal fame started on the first of a series of journeys through Asia and Africa, which in their total mileage probably eclipse the record of any other explorer.

Abu Abdallah Mohammed Ibn Abdallah El Lawati, or, as he is generally called in short, Ibn Batuta, was a Moor of Tangiers. At the age of twenty-one he left Morocco to fulfil the duty incumbent on all good Mohammedans, i.e. a pilgrimage to Mecca, and it was twenty-four years before he again saw the walls of his native town. His experiences during this protracted period were so

MECCA

many and so varied that only a very few of them can be even referred to in the space of a short chapter.

Passing overland along the north of Africa, Batuta reached Cairo, and proceeded thence into Upper Egypt, with the intention of crossing the Red Sea to Mecca. He was obliged, however, to return to Cairo without effecting his purpose, and consoled himself with a tour through Syria, visiting among other objects of interest the "Mosque of the Foot" outside the walls of Damascus, so called from its containing a stone having upon it the print of the foot of Moses. He relates, in his autobiography, that to the north of the town was a deep cave, in which legend declared that Abraham had been born.

Batuta now joined a body of pilgrims, with whom he made the journey to Mecca, and subsequently to the Prophet's tomb at Medina. He then turned northwards, crossing the mountains of Khurzistan to Ispahan, "a large and handsome city." We next find him at Shiraz, the king of which town had a great reputation for liberality. "On one occasion," says Batuta, "he placed one of his Emirs in a pair of scales, putting gold in the opposite part, till the gold preponderated. He then gave him the gold."

His restlessness carried him on to Bagdad and across the desert to Mecca, where he rested for three years, gathering information for an extended trip down the east coast of Africa. During this journey he touched at Aden, which he thus describes: "It is a large city, but without either seed, water, or tree. They have, however, reservoirs, in which they collect the rain-water for drinking. Some rich merchants reside here; and vessels from India occa-

THE BETEL TREE

sionally arrive here." Then, as now, Aden was not a pleasant place of residence, but an important port of call, on account of its position on the "gate" of the Red Sea.

His ship presently brought him to Makdashu, the inhabitants of which were very corpulent, having appetites that, as he quaintly remarks, made them each eat as much as a congregation ought to do. His next stopping-place was the island of Mombasa, well covered with banana, lemon, and citron trees. From here he sailed across the Indian Ocean to Southern Arabia, where he first made the acquaintance of the betel tree and cocoa-nut palm. The first was trained up the second as a support. "The betel tree," writes the traveller, "produces no fruit, but is reared merely for its leaf, which is like the leaf of a thorn, and the smallest are the best. These leaves are plucked daily. The people of India esteem it very highly, for whenever any one of them receives a visit from another, the present is five of these leaves, which is thought to be very splendid, particularly if the donor happens to be one of the nobles. This gift is esteemed among them as being more valuable than that of gold and silver. Its use is as follows: A grain of fawfel (which in some respects is like a nutmeg) is first taken and broken into small pieces; it is then put into the mouth and chewed. A leaf of the betel is then taken, and when sprinkled with a little quicklime is put into the mouth and chewed with the fawfel. Its properties are to sweeten the breath, help the digestion, and to obviate the danger incident to drinking water on an empty stomach;

SOUTH RUSSIA

it also elevates the spirits." It may here be remarked that the fawfel is the betel nut produced by the areca palm ; while the betel leaf grows on a vine. The habit of chewing both nut and leaf is so widespread among Oriental races that one-tenth of the whole human family is said to be addicted to it. Nearly two centuries later Magellan's companions were much disgusted by the betel-chewing of the Pacific islanders.

"The cocoa-nut," says Batuta, "is like a man's head, for it has something like two eyes and a mouth ; and within, when green, is like the brains. Upon it, too, is a fibré-like hair, from which men make cords for sewing their vessels together, instead of iron nails. They also make ropes for their anchors out of it." These remarks are but a few of many which prove the Moor to have been a man of keen observation. Yet he sometimes goes astray. For instance, in his description of the pearl fisheries of the Persian Gulf, he states seriously that the flesh of the oyster, when exposed to the air, hardens and becomes a pearl !

In 1332 we find our explorer once more in Mecca, which seems to have had a magnetic attraction for him. Thence crossing the Red Sea, he traversed Upper Egypt, and descended the Nile to Cairo. After roaming about through the petty sultanates of Asia Minor, Batuta sailed across the Black Sea to Caffa, the first Christian city he had entered, where he was much astonished by the ringing of bells. To verify certain accounts of the northern "Land of Darkness," he journeyed up the Volga and made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate into the north of

ASTRACHAN

Russia. He gives an interesting description of travel in those parts, performed on sledges drawn by dogs. These dogs were of great value, and were always fed before their master ate, lest "they should become enraged, and run away, and leave him to perish."

Desiring a closer acquaintance with the unbelievers, Batuta joined the train of a Greek princess—daughter of the Emperor Andronicus and wife of a Tartar sultan—who was about to visit her father in Constantinople. This lady travelled with a large retinue and a movable mosque which was set up for her daily prayers. On the journey they met some Russians, "with red hair and blue eyes, an ugly and perfidious people."

They reached the capital of the Eastern Empire one day at sunset, amid a loud clangour of bells. Batuta, like his companions, was searched for hidden weapons, and then allowed to pass and do homage to the Emperor, who questioned him about Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Damascus, and Egypt. At his request he was furnished with a guide to show him the "lions" of the place, including the Church of St. Sophia. This, as a good Moslem, he could not enter, since all visitors were required to bow before a cross set up inside the door.

After a stay of five weeks he returned to Astrachan, which he made the starting-point for a journey through Persia and Afghanistan to India. He mentions having seen a man in a cave in the Hindu Kush Mountains who was 350 years old, and grew fresh teeth and hair every hundred years! Reference is also made to the Afghans as notorious robbers. Batuta's party apparently had hard

SUTTEE

fighting to do with these gentry while threading the passes into India.

Now begins the second, and in some ways the most interesting, period of his travels. At Mooltan, the principal city of Sind, he watched the Emir testing the value of recruits. "He had always before him a number of bows of various sizes, and when any one who wished to enlist as a bowman presented himself, the Emir threw one of these bows to him, which he drew with all his might. Then, as his strength proved to be, so was his situation and appointment. When any one wished to enlist as a horseman, a drum was fixed, and the man ran with his horse at full speed, and struck the drum with his spear. Then, according to the effect of the stroke was his place determined."

That Indian customs were much the same then as they were at the time of the English Conquest, and in some cases still are, may be gathered from his observations on *suttee*. "I saw," he says, "women burn themselves when their husbands died. The woman adorns herself and is accompanied by a cavalcade of the infidel Hindus and Brahmans, with drums, trumpets, and men following her, both Moslems and Infidels, for mere pastime. The fire had already been kindled, and into it they threw the dead husband. The wife then threw herself upon him, and both were entirely burnt. A woman's burning herself with her husband, is not, however, considered absolutely necessary among them, but is encouraged; and when a woman burns herself with her husband her family is considered as being ennobled, and supposed to be worthy

KING OF DELHI

of trust. But when she does not burn herself, she is ever afterward clothed coarsely, and remains in constraint among her relatives, on account of her want of fidelity to her husband."

Delhi was at that time the greatest city in Hindustan. Its enormous wall, fine mosques, huge reservoirs, and pleasure-gardens aroused the enthusiasm of Batuta. Mohammed Tuglak, the reigning Emperor, invited the Moor to his capital, and appointed him *cazi*, or magistrate, of Delhi, with a liberal salary. Mohammed's character was a strange mixture of ferocity and magnanimity. He murdered his father and brother; yet endowed many charities. His capricious temper kept his subjects in a state of constant fear. On one occasion, after a partial revolt of the townsfolk, he ordered all the inhabitants to quit the place; threatening with dire punishment anybody who should be found in the streets or houses after a certain time. Only two persons failed to obey the command, one a blind man, the other a bed-ridden invalid. But their infirmities did not save them; for the tyrant had the bed-ridden man hurled from a catapult, and his companion dragged to death by a horse.

Such was the man under whom Batuta took service. The new *cazi*, through consorting with a sheikh upon whom the Emperor's displeasure fell, nearly came to an untimely end as a suspected conspirator. He alone out of the sheikh's friends escaped execution—probably because the Emperor found his aid valuable, though Batuta himself ascribes his escape to the repetition of a text thirty-

GOES TO MALDIVE ISLANDS

three thousand times ! At any rate he soon regained his master's favour, and was put in command of a mission to China, carrying presents for the Emperor of that country.

While travelling to Calicut, the port of embarkation, the mission came to blows with a party of Hindus. The latter were routed, but unfortunately Batuta and a few companions got separated from the main body during the pursuit, and were captured. The resourceful Moor managed to escape, and after suffering great hardships rejoined his men. At Calicut all the presents, together with Batuta's personal belongings, were embarked on Chinese junks, which then, as now, had "sails made of cane-reeds woven together like a mat." Some were so large as to accommodate a thousand men, the motive power being partly supplied by oars of great length, requiring twenty-five men to work each. In the largest junks, according to our traveller, pot herbs and ginger were raised in regular gardens ; and what with these and houses built on deck the junks resembled small floating towns.

A great disaster now overtook the mission, for a storm arose and sank the vessel carrying the present. As he did not dare to face the Emperor with the dire news, Batuta lingered among the cities of the western coast, and took part in several military adventures, including the capture of Goa by the King of Hinaur ; and when he was weary of the clash of arms he sailed for the Maldive Islands.

These he pronounces to be one of the wonders of the

A MONKEY STORY

world, "for they number about two thousand, and are so close together that the dwellers on one island could recognize those on another." The populace had such an aversion to fighting that they did not attempt to repulse piratical Hindu raiders, though any dishonesty among themselves was severely punished. Batuta, as a Mohammedan, did not scruple to marry several wives, and to divorce them at his pleasure. The Governor created him *cazi*, and at first showed him great favour; but presently became jealous of him because he had connected himself by marriage with many of the most influential people on the islands. The traveller therefore thought it advisable to resume his travels, and sailed for Ceylon. The most interesting episode of his stay there was a visit to Adam's Peak. About the monkeys which lived in large numbers on the mountain he heard many stories, one of which he repeats with all gravity. "I was told by two pious and credible persons that the monkeys have a leader, whom they follow as if he were a king. About his head is tied a turban composed of the leaves of trees; and he reclines on a staff. At his right and left hand are four monkeys, with rods in their hands, all of which stand at his head whenever the leading monkey sits. His wives and children are daily brought in on these occasions, who sit down before him; then comes a number of monkeys, which sit and form a sort of assembly about him. One of the four monkeys then addresses them, and they disperse. After this each of them comes with a lemon, a nut, or some of the mountain fruit, which he throws down before the leader. He then eats, together with his wives,

JOURNEY THROUGH ARCHIPELAGO

children, and the four principal monkeys; then they all disperse. One of the Jogeas (fakirs) also told me that he once saw the four monkeys standing in the presence of their leader, and beating another monkey with rods; after which they plucked off all his hair."

By means of a series of chains attached to the rock, pilgrims to the sacred imprint of Adam's foot effected the most difficult portion of the ascent. The last of the chains was called the "Chain of Witness," because when any one arrived at it and looked down he was seized with vertigo and feared that he would fall. According to Batuta, the footmark is eleven spans (six feet) long. Even from China folk come to venerate it, and some of the more enterprising had, previous to his visit, cut out the portion of rock bearing the great-toe mark and carried it away to form the centre of attraction in a Celestial shrine.

From Ceylon, Batuta returned to the Malabar coast, and made a second voyage to the Maldives. A desire there came upon him to visit the East Indies and Cathay. In Sumatra he was hospitably entertained by the King, who fitted out a junk to carry him to China. In Java he witnessed a peculiar act of devotion. A man came before the King and made a long speech. This concluded, he decapitated himself. "Does any among you do such a thing as this?" asked the King. "These our servants do so out of love for us." The father and the grandfather of this man had also immolated themselves in honour of their reigning monarch. The custom brought honour to the dead, for the Javanese apparently did not

CHINESE REGULATIONS

consider a living loyalist to be more useful than a dead hero.

The Chinese port at which he landed was Chinchew, already made famous by Marco Polo. Though Batuta was kindly treated whithersoever he went, he specially notes the precautions taken by the Chinese against undesirable "alien immigration"; also the thoroughness of the police regulations with regard to the manning of vessels, the movements of strangers, and the protection of travellers. In consideration of the present "China for the Chinese" movement, the whole passage will no doubt interest the reader.

"I once scarcely entered one of their cities. Some time after I had occasion to visit it again, and what should I see upon its walls, and upon papers stuck up in its streets, but pictures of myself and my companions! This is constantly done with all who pass through their towns. And should any stranger do anything to make flight necessary, they would then send out his picture to the other provinces, and wherever he might happen to be he would be taken.

"It is also a practice with them that when a vessel leaves China, an account, as well of the names as of the forms of the men in it, is taken and laid up. When the vessel returns, the servants of the magistrates board it, and compare the persons in it with the description taken; and if one should happen to be missing the commander of the vessel is taken, unless he can prove that the man has died by some sickness or other circumstance, or that he has left him, with his own consent, in some other of

CHINESE CARE OF TRAVELLERS

the Chinese provinces. After this they require of the commander a register of all the goods in the vessel, which they obtain. The people of the vessel then leave it, and the King's servants take possession of and clear it; and if they find anything in it not registered in the register, the vessel, together with its freightage, is forfeited to the King.

“The care they take of travellers among them is truly surprising; and hence *their country is to travellers the best and safest*; for here a man may travel alone for nine months together, with a great quantity of wealth, without the least fear. The reason of this is, there is in every district an inn, over which the magistrate of the place has control. Every evening the magistrate comes with his secretary to the inn, and registers in the book the names of all the inmates who are strangers; he then locks them up. In the morning he comes again with his secretary, and compares the name written down with the person in the inn. The register so made out he sends by a messenger to the presiding magistrate at the next station, from whom he also brings back vouchers that such and such persons have arrived safely with their property. This is done at every station. When any person happens to be lost, or anything is stolen, and this is discovered, the magistrate who has the control over the inn in which the loss is sustained is taken into custody on that account. In all the inns everything that a traveller can want is provided.”

Batuta's account of his travels in China are somewhat

CHINESE JUGGLERS

disjointed, and by some authorities partly discredited. It is hard to identify the towns that he passed through; but he probably visited Canton, Hanchow, and Peking. The second of these he describes as the largest city he had ever seen—so large that a traveller might proceed through it for three days. In fact it really was composed of six cities, arranged concentrically, with walls between. The second one entered, it is interesting to note, was set apart for Jews, Christians and Turks who worshipped the sun. It is supposed that Jews first entered China in the third century B.C.; and that the Christians here referred to were the descendants of missionaries sent overland from Syria in the fifth century of our era.

In the fourth city, the most beautiful of the six, Batuta was entertained by the Khan, and witnessed some juggling feats which recall those ascribed to Indian jugglers of the present day. A performer took a wooden sphere, in which there were holes, through which a long strap passed, and threw it up into the air till it went out of sight, the strap remaining in his hand. He then commanded one of his attendants to climb the strap, and the man climbed till he went out of sight. His master called him three times, and, no answer coming, cut the strap. It also disappeared. Presently he threw a hand upon the ground; then another hand, and two feet, a body, and a head. These he placed together, and stamped on them, and lo! the attendant stood before them. The sight was too much for Batuta, who fainted and had to be restored by stimulants. One of the onlookers assured him that there had been neither ascent nor cutting of

BATUTA'S WANDERINGS

limbs, but that the whole had been mere juggling. We should much like to know how it was done!

We must omit any description of Batuta's return journey to Morocco, which he reached in 1349, after an absence of twenty-four years. Yet the restless man was ever eager for movement. He crossed the Mediterranean and toured through Spain, still occupied by the Moors. Then he turned south and traversed the Sahara, till he reached the Niger, which, like Herodotus speaking of the Nasamonians, he imagined to be the Nile. Down this river he sailed to Timbuctoo and Gogo, and then retraced his steps to Fez through the desert.

This extraordinary man's wanderings ended in 1354. During his twenty-eight years of travel he covered, at the very lowest estimate, a distance of 75,000 miles—equivalent to thrice the circumference of the earth. The Sultan of Morocco commanded him to dictate his experiences to the royal secretary, Mohammed Jogai, whose manuscript long afterwards fortunately passed into French hands. It ends with the words: "No person of sense can fail to see that this Sheikh is the traveller of our age; and he who should call him the traveller of the whole body of Islam would not exceed the truth."

Ibu Batuta died in 1378, aged seventy-three years. "To do justice to the traveller's own character, as he has unconsciously drawn it," says his biographer, Colonel Henry Yule, "would require the hand of Chaucer and his freedom of speech. Not deficient either in acuteness or humanity; full of vital energy and enjoyment; infinite in curiosity; daring, restless, sensual, impulsive, incon-

HIS CHARACTER

siderate, extravagant ; superstitious in his regard for the Moslem saints and quacks, and plying devout observances when in difficulties ; an agreeable companion, for he is always welcomed at first, but clinging like a horseleech when he finds a full-blooded subject, and hence apt to disgust his patrons and then to turn to intrigue against them—such is the picture we form of this prince of Moslem travellers.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEARCH FOR AN OCEAN WAY TO INDIA

The awakening of Europe after the Dark Ages—Pilgrims and Crusaders succeeded by explorers—The need to find a new route to India—Influence of Indies on European imagination—Terrors of the Atlantic—The man to brave them, Prince Henry the Navigator—The Prince and his brothers—He takes part in an attack on Ceuta—Settles down at Cape Sagres—Motives which made him the patron of exploration—The Madeira Islands rediscovered—Cape Bojador passed—Portuguese disaster at Tangiers—First slaves brought to Portugal from West African coast—also gold—Popular enthusiasm aroused—The slave trade—Its effect on exploration—Great expedition of 1444—Luigi Cadamosto—Reaches and explores the Senegal River—Discovers the Cape Verde Islands—Diego Gomez—Travels inland and opens trade with the natives—Death of Prince Henry.

PASSING over half a century after the death of Odoric, we find ourselves at the beginning of the period of exploration which led to an enormous expansion of European influence throughout the world.

Europe had recovered from the lethargy of the Dark Ages. Her armies had wrestled again and again with the Moslems for possession of the Holy Land; and if success did not crown her efforts in this direction she had at least gained much valuable information about the rich countries

INFLUENCE OF INDIES

of the East, besides enlarging her store of scientific knowledge by contact with Arabian navigators.

The pilgrims of the fourth to the tenth centuries to the holy shrines had been succeeded by national movements of warriors against the Mohammedan conquerors of the lands made sacred by religious associations. The Crusades proved that between Europe and India an insurmountable barrier existed in the Saracen occupation of Egypt and Asia Minor. The Genoese and Venetians managed, it is true, to establish flourishing trade with India; but heavy tolls had to be paid to the traditional foes of Christendom for the privilege of crossing their countries. As Western Europe—Spain, France, England, and Portugal—increased in power, and her sailors became more daring and skilful, the centre of European energy shifted further westwards, and men began to ask themselves whether it might not be possible to find a path to the magnetic riches of India and Cathay which would render them independent of the Mediterranean.

To-day the New World is so dominating as a great field for enterprise that we can hardly realize the magnitude of the attraction exercised in the fourteenth century by the "Indies" on the imagination of Europe. The army of Alexander and the legions of Rome had long before been led through Persia to open up communication for trading purposes. Every solitary explorer who came back to his home in the West told of the exceeding riches of Asia; and of a trade fit to be the prize of a nation's greatest effort. Even the missionaries, whose thoughts turned less to worldly than to spiritual matters, helped to fan the

TERRORS OF THE ATLANTIC

flame of desire for a participation in the wealth that distinguished Asiatic potentates ; while the great harvest of souls which they promised to any nation that would speed the Gospel among the heathen also stimulated the fancy of an age when religion and conquest went hand in hand.

How, then, should India be approached ? How should the Moslem flank be turned ? To us the answer is very evident. But then, we *know*. The folk of the fourteenth century were still battling with the numbing geographical theory of Ptolemy, which expanded Africa southwards to the Pole, and with the superstition which filled the tropics with fiery terrors. Fortunately the invention of the compass had put a mighty weapon in the hand of Science. Italian mariners were steadily mapping out the Mediterranean coasts with a precision that we are bound to admire on examination of their charts. The great Western Ocean, on which men had hitherto turned their backs, now challenged the adventurous sailor. Following the example set by Hanno two thousand years previously, Lancelot Malocello turned southwards from Gibraltar in 1270 and found the Canary Islands. Seventy years later the Italian Boccaccio again landed on them. These small ventures opened the way for a great swarm of explorers as soon as a nation should be found ready to essay the task of braving the difficulties of the Unknown, and a man should arise fit to direct the efforts of that nation.

"The time showeth the man," says an old and true adage. The time is in this case the opening years of the fifteenth century ; the man is Prince Henry of Portugal,

THE PRINCE AND HIS BROTHERS

one of the most remarkable figures in the history of exploration. The effect of his life's work on his own and succeeding ages is hard to calculate, for he is one of those men whose single-hearted pursuit of an end has helped civilization forward at a critical moment. Had Henry not lived, the pathway to the Indies might have remained undiscovered for many more years; and who can say what that delay would have entailed for Europe?

It is impossible to proceed without first glancing at the antecedents of this Prince.

In 1385 King John of Spain threw off the yoke of Castile and won freedom for Portugal. He had five sons—Edward, Pedro, Henry, John, and Ferdinand. Both Pedro and Henry were born explorers, and all were ardent champions of Christendom against the Moors. Pedro is known as the Traveller; Henry as the Navigator. The former earned his title by journeys through Prussia and Italy, in the course of which he amassed much information that proved useful to Henry's sailors. With his brother he distinguished himself at the capture of Ceuta, a Moorish stronghold on the African mainland opposite Gibraltar, which the Barbary pirates used as their base for buccaneering voyages in the Mediterranean. This happened in 1415, the year of Agincourt. Henry made the most of the opportunity for learning about the internal trade and caravan route of Africa, and what he heard of the commerce between Ceuta and the Gold Coast strengthened his already formed determination to search the shores of the Dark Continent.

In 1419 we find him settling down on the rocky head-

MADEIRA ISLANDS REDISCOVERED

land of Sagres—now named Cape St. Vincent—to the serious business of preparing a scheme of discovery. He rebuilt and enlarged the arsenal on the cape, erected a palace, chapel, and observatory, and gathered round him the most skilful navigators and mathematicians of his time.

The motives which prompted him were three: he desired to increase scientific knowledge, to make Portugal wealthy, and to impart the teachings of Christ to the heathen. Personal ambition had no part in his nature. Had he entered the arena of politics he might easily have made a name for himself there, but he deliberately chose to exile himself from the Court and to devote health and fortune to a nobler purpose. As early as 1410 he began to send out his little vessels under the command of his trusty captains. Year by year we see them creep nearer and nearer to the Equator, slowly but surely; hampered by the thirst for gold and slaves which constantly turned their prows towards the land when duty pointed to the unknown south.

His first success came with the rediscovery of the Madeira Islands in 1418, when two of his squires, Gonzalez Zarco and Tristram Vaz, reached Porto Santo. The group was at once annexed to Portugal and colonized. Thirteen years later Gonzalo Cabral, steering south-west into the Atlantic, found Santa Maria Island of the Azores group. Meanwhile other ships were hugging the African coast to Bojador, a rocky promontory washed by strong currents which again and again took the heart out of the Portuguese skippers. There was, too, to deter them, a

CAPE BOJADOR PASSED

legend of terrible things waiting for the Christian who should pass Bojador—sea-monsters, and waves heated to boiling-point by the tropical sun; even Satan himself. The bravest mariners seemed to see confirmation of the tale in the raging surf which fringed the rocks. It took all Prince Henry's powers of persuasion to steel his captains for the task of boldly pricking the fable by actual experience.

In 1484 he despatched Gil Eannes with orders to give Bojador a wide berth; and sure enough, when the dread point had been passed the sea was found to be "as easy to sail in as the seas at home," while instead of the awful monsters a rich and pleasant land smiled at the ship's company. Eannes went ashore and gathered plants to take back to his royal master; but found no traces of human habitation. The next year, Alfonso Baldaya, Henry's cupbearer, and Eannes, each commanding his own vessel, traced the coast for 150 miles beyond Bojador; and on their return Baldaya was at once sent south again to search for natives and bring one home with him. Late in the year he reached what he thought to be the mouth of a great river, the famous River of Gold. He had already named it Rio d'Oro, when to his disappointment the opening proved to be only an inlet in the coast. However, mindful of his commands, he scoured the country for natives. Some were seen, but all escaped capture. This landing on the unknown mainland was the first made by Europeans.

For the next five years exploration languished, because Henry was engaged with other matters. Their success at

SLAVES FROM WEST AFRICA

Ceuta encouraged the Portuguese to attack Tangiers. In 1437 six thousand troops landed, to find that the Moors were quite ready for them. Horsemen and infantry swarmed down from the hills in defence of the town. Henry and his men fought desperately, but they were cut off from their ships and compelled to capitulate. Their arms and baggage passed into the hands of the enemy, and Ferdinand, Henry's brother, had to be left with the Moors as a hostage for the surrender of Ceuta. The proud Portuguese, rather than hand over the town and its inhabitants to the Moslems, allowed Ferdinand to linger in a miserable captivity, from which death released him after six years of terrible sufferings. The humiliation of failure killed King Edward, and Henry would probably have succumbed to the same heart-sickness had not his exploration schemes given him a reason for living.

The year 1441 sees him again busy with his ships. Antonio Gonsalves is despatched to explore the already discovered coasts more thoroughly; and Nuno Tristan to push as far south as possible. Between them they managed to capture a number of native men, women, and children. Gonsalves then turned back. Tristan sailed on and came to a cape, which on account of the white sand round its foot was named Cape Blanco.

In 1442 one of the captured natives, a chief, proposed that he should be ransomed, offering to hand over in exchange half a dozen blacks. So Gonsalves sailed with him to his country, and received in addition to the promised slaves a present of ostrich eggs and some gold dust. The arrival of the last in Lisbon provoked such an

POPULAR ENTHUSIASM AROUSED

outburst of enthusiasm as Henry's most glowing pictures of the possibilities of an ocean path to the Indies had failed to arouse. People who had before scoffed at his schemes, or at least not taken them seriously, were now eager to head an expedition; and when, the next year, Tristan returned with a cargo of slaves, the last doubt as to the value of the lands towards the Equator was dispelled.

Henry unwittingly inaugurated the slave trade which for centuries marred the intercourse of European and aboriginal. To modern consciences the idea of slavery is abhorrent. But at that time no one saw anything wrong in carrying off a heathen black; for if he suffered bodily inconvenience in this world, would not his reception of the Gospel save him in the next? It must be placed to the credit of the Portuguese that they treated their slaves with kindness, in many cases freeing them and endowing them with money and lands. But the trade was necessarily associated with much cruelty, which so provoked the natives that their hostility greatly checked the progress of exploration, since any attempt at investigating the interior of the West Coast was met by armed opposition. Nuno Tristan himself and many other Portuguese fell victims, at one time or another, to the poisoned arrows and javelins of the Africans. If the shores had been entirely uninhabited the Cape route would doubtless have been found many years sooner.

Having popular opinion now behind him, Prince Henry determined to send out what might be called a national expedition. Six caravels left Lagos in 1444 under com-

LUIGI CADAMOSTO

mand of Lançarote, a customs officer. Two hundred and thirty-five natives were "bagged" and brought to the port, which now became a regular slave-market. The Portuguese clamoured for more. The year following a regular armada of twenty-seven vessels repeated the experiment, with considerable success; and, what was of more real importance, Diniz Diaz, one of the commanders, reached Cape Verde, the "Green Cape," a grass-covered headland jutting far into the Atlantic. The Portuguese had now passed the most westerly point of Africa; and all was going well, when Henry's attention was once more diverted by political troubles. On the death of King Edward, Pedro had been appointed Regent, an office which he filled wisely and with success. In 1446, Alfonso, Edward's infant son, came of age, and Pedro wished to retire, while Alfonso begged him to remain in the Court. Evil tongues bred ill-feeling between the two till matters came to an open rupture. Pedro collected his friends and adherents, marched on Lisbon, and met the royal troops in a pitched battle, which ended in his death and that of many of his partisans. During the troublous times which followed, Henry's tact was needed to keep the kingdom together, and he had little chance of furthering Portuguese exploration.

By 1455 things had quieted down sufficiently for him to take up the broken threads. Luigi Cadamosto, a Venetian, caught in a storm off Cape St. Vincent, put into Lagos, and on hearing of the enterprise of the Prince, straightway sought him out. As the result of an interview, Cadamosto left Lagos in March on a long voyage. He

THE SENEGAL RIVER

touched at the Madeira and the Canary Islands, passed Cape Blanco, and entered the Senegal River. Here he made the original move of pushing far up into the country to the land of Budonel, a negro emperor who was so "honest and just in all his dealings" that Cadamosto wishes all Christians were the same. Of what he found in the native villages the Venetian does not draw a very pleasing picture. The district was miserably poor, and the Emperor ruled his subjects with a rod of iron, so that they had little to offer the Portuguese in exchange for European trinkets. They were, however, much impressed by the general appearance of the strangers. "They crowded about me," says Cadamosto, "wondering at our Christian symbols, our white colour, our dress and shape of body, our black silk garments, and robes of blue wool. Some thought that the whiteness of our bodies was not natural, but painted on"—and tried to rub it off.

Retracing his steps to the coast, Cadamosto sailed beyond Cape Verde, and found himself bearing eastwards. Presently he reached the mouth of a river "as large as the Senegal," where he sent a native scout ashore to spy out the land. No sooner had the poor wretch won the beach by swimming than a swarm of savages caught him and cut him to pieces. This was enough for the Venetian. He weighed anchor forthwith, and still pressed on. The estuary of another river, the Gambia, soon appeared on the left. Mindful of the treatment meted out to their spy, the explorers sailed cautiously up the river in the hope of finding some peacefully disposed natives ready to

DIEGO GOMEZ

trade. But the evil fame of the Portuguese had travelled faster than their ships. Four miles from the mouth a flotilla of canoes put out from the banks and attacked the caravel furiously. In vain the interpreters cried out that commerce had brought the ship so far south. "We refuse to treat with men who eat human flesh," retorted the natives. "What else do you buy slaves for, if not to eat them?"

Cadamosto now thought it time to turn back. He had approached so near to the Equator that the Southern Cross was visible, and the summer nights and days were of almost equal length. In 1456 he again visited the Gambia, discovering on the way the Cape Verde Islands, where he stayed some while. The natives of the Gambia were on this occasion more approachable, conversing through interpreters with the Europeans. At their invitation Cadamosto ascended the river forty miles to the capital of King Batti, with whom they carried on some profitable trade, as the natives gladly exchanged gold, furs, and fruits for worthless baubles. A fortnight's stay in this unhealthy region made its mark on the health of his crew, so the captain sailed seawards again, with the intention of following the coast still farther. But after seventy miles of cruising his men asked him that he would put the helm about; which he did, and ran back to Lagos.

The last expedition which Henry had to do with was that of Diego Gomez, whom he sent out in 1458 with orders to go as far as he could. He managed to get to Cadamosto's furthest point, the Rio Grande; and then,

TRAVELS INLAND

like him, he turned back. "We put back and came to a land where there were groves of palms near the shore, with their branches broken, so tall that from a distance I thought that they were the masts or spars of negroes' vessels. So we went ashore and found a great plain covered with hay and more than five thousand animals like stags, but larger, who showed no fear of us. Five animals came down a small river that was fringed with trees . . . and on the shore we saw holes of crocodiles in plenty." They then ascended a river which they imagined to be the Gambia, where Nuno Tristan had met his death, "as far as Cantor, which is a large town near the river side. Farther than this the ships cannot go, because of the thick growth of trees and underwood, but here I made it known that I had come to exchange merchandise, and the natives came to me in great numbers. Diligent inquiry produced valuable information about the caravan trade across the desert from Carthage, Tunis, Fez, and Egypt, and certain gold mines on the other side of Sierra Leone." Gomez heard too of a great negro chieftain who had subdued all the other chiefs of the interior. A promising chance of opening up trade relations with the natives of the gold regions was cut short by the sickness of his men with that malaria which has ever since made such ravages among Europeans. "After I had gone down the river fifty leagues they told me of a great chief living on the south side who wished to speak with me. We met in a wood on the bank, and he brought with him a vast throng of people armed with poisoned arrows, assegais, swords and shields. I went to

DEATH OF PRINCE HENRY

him carrying some presents and biscuits and some wine, for they have no wine except that made from the date-palm, and he was pleased and extremely gracious, giving me three negroes and swearing to me by the one God that he would never make war against the Christians, that they might trade and travel safely through all his country.”¹

Gomez now despatched an Indian to the inland chiefs with messages of peace, and received from them ivory and slaves; and to make the Gambia safe for future explorers he came to terms with Nomimansa, who had had a hand in the death of Tristan. “I begged the king that his chief men and eight of his wives should dine with me on my caravel; and they came all unarmed and I gave them fowls and meat and wine, as much as they could drink, and they said to one another that no people were better than the Christians.” Nomimansa then asked to be baptized, and as Gomez could not himself perform the ceremony he wrote to Prince Henry asking for a priest to be sent.

The conduct of this explorer contrasts pleasantly with that of his predecessors, Cadamosto excepted. Had the Portuguese from the first tried to make friends of the natives instead of harrying and enslaving them, they would probably have won more by commerce than they would have lost in slave-money.

In 1460, Henry, worn out by strenuous exertions and worry, died on the cape which he had made his watch-tower over the Atlantic. For forty years he had laboured

¹ Quoted from *Prince Henry the Navigator*, Raymond Beagley, p. 193.

THE POET'S EULOGY

incessantly on the solution of the great problem of the south-east passage. His faith and science had dispelled the terrors of the tropical ocean: Bojador was no longer a Scylla. Under his fostering care the Portuguese had attained first place as daring mariners,—the very men who had once refused to pass this Bojador. The coast of Africa had been explored for two thousand miles; and things were now ready for the next advance which carried the Portuguese to the Cape of Good Hope. Henry did not live to see his aspirations fulfilled; but successful must a man be called who opened to his country a hundred years of prosperity and wealth, and who is ultimately responsible for the discovery of the Cape route to India.

The Lusitanian Prince, who, heaven-inspired,
To love of useful glory roused mankind
And in unbounded commerce mixed the world.

So wrote the poet Thomson; and no poetical eulogy was ever more fully justified.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROUNDING OF THE CAPE

Effect of Prince Henry's death on exploration—Alfonso V no explorer—King John II an enthusiast—Carries on Henry's work—Despatches Diego Cam to explore West African coast—Cam gets to Walfish Bay—Bartholomew Diaz—Rounds the Cape of Good Hope and reaches Algoa Bay—Joy of the King—Pedro de Covilham goes to India and Abyssinia—Accession of Emmanuel—Expedition under Vasco da Gama—Rounds Cape and discovers Natal—Sails up east coast—Crosses Indian Ocean—Calicut—Jealousy of Moors—Da Gama received by King of Calicut—Is kidnapped—and released—Return voyage—Scurvy—One vessel burned—Back in Portugal—Honours conferred on da Gama—Overland trade route from Red Sea to Alexandria.

THE death of the Navigator had immediate effects on oceanic exploration. Alfonso the Fifth, the reigning king, preferred armies to armadas, and spent much of his time in quarrels with his powerful neighbour of Spain. The latter years of his life were not, however, entirely unmarked by geographical advance southwards, for in 1471 Fernando Po reached the island now named after him, in the great angle of the West Coast of Africa ; and in 1475 two Portuguese pilots crossed the Equator to St. Catherine's Point, two degrees south latitude.

When Alfonso died, in 1481, a new era of discovery began. His successor, King John the Second, burned with

CAM GETS TO WALFISH BAY

the spirit of Henry, whose well-trying captains still hung about the Court anxious to lead some expedition towards India. He at once ordered the erection of a fort at Elmina, on the Gold Coast, in the territory of one Caramansa, a negro king, whom John's emissaries were able to convince of the advantages that would arise from the presence of a European colony.

Having secured a footing in the Bay of Benin, and having obtained from the Pope—the parceller-out of unknown countries among the kings of Christendom—the right to claim the African coasts and islands as far as India, he despatched Diego Cam with the first of those pillars which every captain was henceforth to carry and erect on newly discovered coasts, to ear-mark them for Portugal. Each pillar had engraved on it the name of the king and captain, and the date of its erection.

Cam reached the Congo in 1484, set up the first pillar, and opened relations with the natives living in the basin of that mighty river. Their chief was so much impressed by Cam's tactful manners that he expressed his willingness to be baptized, with his people, if priests should be sent from Portugal. When the priests arrived they admitted many negroes to the Christian fold, one being credited with the baptism of five thousand converts in a single day.

The next year Cam sailed to Walfish Bay, almost on the Tropic of Capricorn, and, without knowing it, came within a few hundred miles of the Cape.

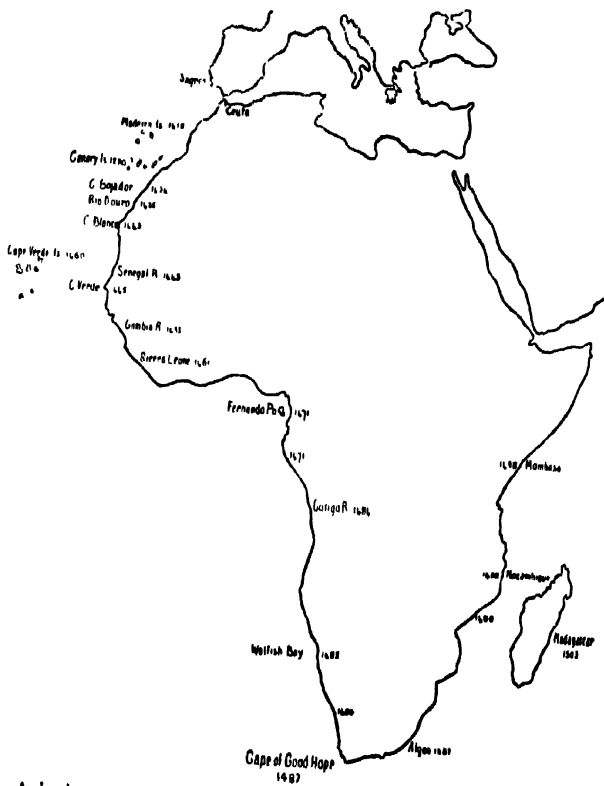
The rounding of Africa was reserved for another bold mariner, Bartolommeo (or, as we call him, Bartholomew)

BARTHOLOMEW DIAZ

Diaz, a knight of the royal household, and probably a descendant of the discoverer of Cape Verde and the Senegal. In August, 1486, King John sent him out in command of a squadron of three small ships. The chief object of this expedition was the gathering of information about the mysterious Prester John. Certain negroes and negresses brought to Portugal by Cam were set ashore with orders to penetrate the interior as far as possible for news of the Priest-King, after having had their zeal stimulated by the promise of rich rewards to any one who should succeed in the search.

Diaz then pursued his southward course, and passed Walfish Bay and the Orange River. As the weather had now become very threatening, he stood well out to sea, fearing shipwreck on an unknown coast. It was well that he did so, for a tremendous storm overtook the ships and swept them before it into regions so cold that the sailors were scarcely able to manage the tackle with their numbed fingers. When calmer weather came, at the end of fourteen days, Diaz turned his prow east; and presently, as no land appeared, north. The ships soon arrived in a bay where cows were browsing near the shore. This Diaz named Flesh Bay, or the Cowherd's Bay, but it afterwards became known as Algoa Bay, since vessels stopped there on the outward journey to (*à la*) Goa; while De la Goa Bay was the corresponding port of call for the return voyage.

The crews had suffered so many hardships in their stormy experiences of the last month, that they now began to murmur. It was full time, they said, that they should



A sketch map to show the gradual advance of exploration round the African coast during the fifteenth century.

PIEDRO DE COVILHAM

make for Portugal again; and in spite of their commander's earnest entreaties could not be persuaded to sail more than three days east of their first landing-place. Diaz, sorely against his will, put his helm about, convinced that he had not yet reached the southernmost point of Africa, since the coast still tended due east. His bitter disappointment was, however, turned to joy when, one day, there loomed ahead a mighty promontory, the Cape of Storms, as he termed it in memory of a terrific tempest which almost overwhelmed his vessels. After rounding this and finding the coast turn sharply northwards, Diaz felt certain that the long-sought-for route had at last been discovered. Africa had been proved to terminate southward.

In December, 1487, Diaz dropped anchor in the Tagus and hurried ashore with his great news, which the King received enthusiastically.

"Thou southernmost point," the joyful King exclaimed,
"Cape of Good Hope be thou for ever named"—

and by that name we know it to-day. John richly rewarded his successful explorer, but did not again put him in command of an expedition. Diaz perished, fourteen years later, in a storm not far from the Cape which has immortalized his memory.

In the year of the rounding of the Cape two emissaries were sent from Portugal, Pedro de Covilham and Alfonso de Payva, to prosecute the search by land for Prester John. Both these men were conversant with the Arabic language, and otherwise fitted for the task of penetrating

INDIA AND ABYSSINIA

to the Court of the Christian King. To avoid arousing suspicion, they travelled disguised as merchants. At Alexandria they separated, Covilham to investigate the Indian trade routes and gather information about the influence of Arabian merchants in the East—this was a subsidiary object of their expedition; Payva to ascend the Nile to Abyssinia, where the residence of Prester John had now been definitely located. Payva reached Abyssinia, but died before he could send back word of his success. His fellow-countryman meanwhile reached Ormuz overland, and thence sailed down the east coast of Africa to Sofala, twenty degrees south latitude, and Madagascar. During this voyage he learnt that the coast was easy of access; and, what was of equal importance, that a flourishing trade was carried on by Arab traders between it and India. Armed with this knowledge, he returned to Cairo, where he heard of Payva's death, and found orders from the King awaiting him to go forthwith to Abyssinia. Before setting out on this enterprise he committed to writing all his experiences in the Indian Ocean, and handed the manuscript over to John's messenger. It was well that he did so; for although the Prester received him kindly, he would not let him return to his native country, fearful lest the two envoys who had reached him in one year should prove to be the single spies preceding the battalions of the King of Portugal; and in Abyssinia Covilham remained till he died.

Two most important facts were now in the possession of the Portuguese: first, that Africa could be rounded; secondly, that the ocean on its farther side led straight to

VASCO DA GAMA

India. King John lost no time in preparing a great fleet which should forge the last link in the chain of discovery, and place the riches of India in the lap of Portugal. But a terrible blow, the death of his only son, Alfonso, overtook him while he gathered his ships; his interest in the expedition waned; delay followed delay; and the arrival of Columbus in Lisbon with news of discoveries in the West dried up any enthusiasm that had survived the shock of his great domestic trouble.

The accession of King Emmanuel the Great infused fresh life into Portuguese exploration. Spain was already considered to be perilously near the shores of China—for the fact had not yet been realized that a continent as large as Africa barred the way to the eastern shores of the New World. It therefore required little persuasion on the part of his admirals to make Emmanuel give the order for the preparation of a squadron which should anticipate the arrival of the Spaniards at the golden gates of India.

Four ships, commanded by Vasco da Gama, a man in whom were united all the qualities necessary for bringing so great a task to a successful conclusion, left the Tagus, June 8th, 1497. In consideration of the probable duration of the voyage the fleet carried provisions for three years; and for the better establishment of cordial relations with the rulers of Africa and India, to da Gama were entrusted open letters from the King. By the end of November, the Cape of Good Hope had been passed, and the ships had reached coasts hitherto unexplored. The *Account of a Journey*, written by a sailor of the expedition named

OUTBREAK OF SCURVY

Alvaro Velhes, tells how at Christmas they came opposite a fruitful land, which in honour of the season was named Natal.¹ The crews, who a few weeks before had been scared into mutiny by the tempests of the Cape of Storms, now turned to the other extreme of hopefulness, and, as one man, cried to sail straight for India. It was necessary, however, to land at Rio de Cobre for water and fresh provisions, and here the Portuguese made their first acquaintance with the Kaffirs; whose king they won to their side by the present of such personal adornment as is still able to melt the heart of a negro potentate. Proceeding north, they passed Delagoa Bay and anchored in the mouth of the Zambesi to repair their ships. This great river they named "The River of Good Tidings," on account of the news received of a civilized country not far to the north. Scarcely had they set sail for this country when a new disease, scurvy, a terrible swelling of the hands, feet, and gums, began to affect the sailors. Had it not been for the care of their commander in fighting this strange malady, things would have gone hard with the expedition. On March 2nd they arrived at Mozambique, inhabited by Mohammedans. "Their clothing was very rich bright-striped robes of linen and cotton, turbans of glistening silks interwoven with gold thread, and Moorish swords and daggers. Near the harbour lay Moorish merchants' ships, very large, but without decks, and the planks held together without nails,² by means of bast, which was prepared from the shell of the cocoa-nut. The sails consisted of matting made of palm leaves, and

¹ From *Dies Natalis*, the Day of the Nativity.

² Cp. Odoric's account of the ships at Ormuz.

SAILS UP EAST COAST

the whole rigging was very scanty. Yet these miserable vessels made long voyages to sea, and, to the astonishment of the admiral, were well provided with compasses, quadrants, and charts. They were laden with gold and silver, cloth, cloves, pepper, pearls, and precious stones; and the natives stated that all these commodities were to be found in a country not far distant.”¹

This port, where the Portuguese first came into contact with Indian traders, was unfortunately also the scene of the first of those bloody conflicts between Christians and Moors which stain the records of Portuguese enterprise in the Indian Ocean.

Guided by local pilots, the fleet sailed northwards from Mozambique to Quiloa and Mombasa. At both places the people received the Portuguese in a manner which further increased the ill-feeling already abroad; but at Melinde a hospitable welcome awaited the explorers. The king of the port sent aboard a present of sheep, fowls, and vegetables, and expressed the wish that peace and friendship might be established with his visitors. Da Gama, not to be outdone in courtesy, despatched in return a silver vase of preserves, a napkin, and some water—a mark of welcome to a guest—and then had his ships dressed with flags, while the guns sent some balls ricocheting over the waves; the last no doubt serving the double purpose of awing the natives as well as doing honour to the king. Presently an interview took place on the sea, da Gama and the Moorish king being each in his own boat. The admiral bestowed upon the Moor a splendid sword in a scabbard “of enamelled gold, very handsome,

¹ *A Century of Discovery*, p. 64.

CROSSES INDIAN OCEAN

with its belts, very magnificent, and a lance of gilt iron," as a gift from Emmanuel; and the king, in accepting it, said: "I promise and swear by my religion for ever to comply with true peace and friendship with the King of Portugal, my new brother; and I hold it to be a good fortune to possess the friendship of so great a king as is yours." Nor were these mere empty words, for the sheikh of Melinde remained faithful to his compact, and on many subsequent occasions helped Portuguese vessels that came to his shores.

After taking in supplies and shipping a pilot skilled in the navigation of the Indian Ocean, da Gama left the African coast on 24 April, 1498, and stood boldly towards India. Twenty days of sailing brought the fleet to Cananore, on the Malabar coast. The king of that town, seeing the strange ships approach, consulted his diviners about them, and was told that the people in the ships should conquer India, "upon which he determined in his heart to establish with the Portuguese all the peace and friendship that was possible."

For the time he had no chance of putting this prudent plan into execution, as the vessels without touching ran southwards to Calicut. Da Gama, after making due inquiry as to the etiquette of trading in this port, sent a message on shore to the effect that the King of Portugal was desirous of exchanging his gold, silver, and rich merchandise for pepper and drugs of India; and that his ships were but a small detachment of a large fleet of fifty vessels from which he had been separated by a storm. The latter half of the message was of course an untruth,

CALICUT

calculated to impress the *Zamorin*, as the ruler of Calicut was styled, with the idea that a regular armada was at the back of these strangers. The envoy, a Moor, did not fail to extol da Gama's generosity, "upon which the king felt a great longing to obtain as much from our people; and he sent to say to the captain-major that he grieved much for his ill-fortune, and rejoiced at his fleet having arrived at his port; that as to the cargo which he was going in search of, he would fill his ships with as much pepper and drugs as he wished for, and would give him on payment whatever there was in the city; and in the meantime they might do what they pleased."

The city of Calicut, says our author,¹ was at that time the principal port in India on account of its trade, which was in the hands of the Moors of Cairo. These had become so influential that many of the lower caste Indians had adopted their religion when they found that they thereby gained greater importance in the state. The traders were not slow to perceive in the advent of the Portuguese a great danger to their commerce, if the newcomers should win the ear of the *Zamorin*. They therefore sedulously spread the rumour that these apparently peaceful merchants were armed spies sent to prepare the way for a general invasion; and by means of bribes judiciously distributed secured an entry for the rumours into the palace itself. A resident in Calicut, a Moor, who had travelled through Spain and been converted to Christianity, warned the Portuguese of the state of popular feeling, and advised them to go cautiously. The commander immediately sent an envoy to the *Zamorin*, asking

¹ Gaspar Correa.

DA GAMA IS KIDNAPPED

him for a guarantee of peace before trading relations could be opened. This being granted, a depot was established in the town, with a stock of "a chest of one hundredweight of branch coral, and as much vermilion, and a barrel of quicksilver, fifty pigs of copper, twenty strings of large cut coral, and as much of amber," together with a set of balances for weighing the sales. Bartering commenced at once, the Portuguese accepting adulterated ginger and cinnamon without protest, in order to obtain a footing and deflect trade from the Moors. The latter, however, pointed out that people who could not tell the quality of what was bought must evidently not be real merchants, but, as they had maintained from the first, only spies in disguise; and advised the Zamorin to treat any further embassy in such a manner as to make the Portuguese disclose their real character.

When, therefore, at the Zamorin's invitation, da Gama went on shore next day, he was told that the king had gone into the country and would not return till evening. The admiral at once put back to his ship, saying that when the king was ready to receive him in Calicut he would come again. This had the desired effect. Word was soon brought that the Zamorin awaited him in his palace. Da Gama then prepared a present and landed. The Zamorin received him graciously—so graciously that the Moors conspired with the Catual, or chamberlain, to kidnap the commander. Pretending that the Zamorin wished to speak with him again, the Catual got da Gama into a litter, and carried him off inland for some distance, and then coolly informed him that he and his men were proved spies, and that the king had ordered his ships to

RECEPTION AT CANANORE

be captured and held until a confession was made of their treachery. The chamberlain did not dare, however, to murder his prisoners, as the Moors advised him to do, contenting himself with a fruitless effort to make da Gama order his captains to land all their gold, etc., which would immediately be seized. Instead of telling his second-in-command, his brother Paulo, to do any such thing, Vasco advised him to sail back to Portugal and tell Emmanuel how he was being treated.

The Catual's plot was frustrated by the Portuguese capturing some Nairs, or Calicut nobles, whose heads they threatened to cut off if their admiral were not given up without delay. In the end da Gama had to be released, and a few days later the Portuguese weighed anchor, threatening dire vengeance on the place if they should return.¹

At Cananore, where the fleet next touched, a very different reception awaited it. Presents were exchanged, and the king of the place showed by the manner in which he welcomed the captains that he was really anxious to trade with them. But da Gama was now eager for the homeward voyage, so that after a short stay he set sail for Melinde in November, 1498.

The voyage across the Indian Ocean was greatly delayed by persistent calms and contrary winds. A distance which had occupied but one month on the outward voyage now consumed three months. Scurvy broke out. "All our people suffered again from their gums, which grew over their teeth so that they could not eat. Their

¹ This threat was carried out by da Gama when he next came to India.

SCURVY

legs also swelled, and other parts of the body, and these swellings spread until the sufferer died, without exhibiting symptoms of any other disease. Thirty of our men died in this manner—an equal number having died previously—and those able to navigate our ships were only seven or eight, and even these were not as well as they ought to have been. I assure you that if this state of affairs had continued for another fortnight there would have been no man at all to navigate the ships. We had come to such a pass that all bonds of discipline had gone. Whilst suffering this affliction we addressed vows and petitions to the saints on behalf of our ships. The captains had held counsel, and they had agreed that if a favourable wind enabled we would return to India whence we had come. But it pleased God in his mercy to send us a wind which, in the course of six days, carried us within sight of land, and at this we rejoiced as much as if the land we saw had been Portugal, for with the help of God we hoped to recover our health there, as we had done before.”

The ships had arrived at Magadoxo, some distance north of Melinde. They stayed here a few days and then proceeded to the latter port, where, as previously, a kind welcome was accorded them, and a variety of fruits and other foods were sent aboard. The King of Melinde allowed da Gama to erect a pillar here, as a token of his regard for the Portuguese; nor would he permit the vessels to depart before he had written a long letter to King Emmanuel, with “many requests that he would send his fleet and men to his port.”

¹ From the *Roteiro*, or Journal, of an unknown member of the expedition.

BACK IN PORTUGAL

As they coasted southwards one of the vessels—the *St. Raphael*—showed alarming signs of breaking up. Her crews and cargo were therefore transferred to the other two ships ; after which she was set on fire and allowed to burn to the water's edge.

On February 1st, 1499, a pillar was set up on S. Jozé Island, off Mozambique, in a rain which fell so heavily that it was impossible to light a fire for melting the lead for fixing the cross in the stone. A favourable breeze wafted the ships round the Cape on March 20th, much to the joy of the crews, who were half perished by the cold winds blowing from the south. Da Gama now called his men together and said : "What do you men now say of the great shame with which you covered yourselves, when, from fear of the storm, you wished to seize upon me and lose this great pleasure which we all possess, and this great service which we have rendered unto God, and to the King our Sovereign, who will grant us many favours for our great hardships?" The answer of the battered mariner who acted as spokesman for the crew is admirable in its point and brevity : "Sir, we acted according to as we are ; you acted like as you are. Now, sir, on a day of much joy, it is in reason that we should be pardoned." And pardoned they were, though, in accordance with a vow which he had made at the time of the mutiny, da Gama insisted that the ringleaders should march in chains to the King on landing.

During the northward voyage the two ships were separated near the Cape Verde Islands, and Nicolas Coelho's vessel, the *Berrio*, reached Portugal seven weeks before the flagship. The admiral had been detained at the Azores

OVERLAND TRADE ROUTE

by the death of his brother Paul, to whom he was deeply attached. The body was interred at the monastery of St. Francis on Terceira. The loss so afflicted Vasco that for some weeks he could not tear himself away from the grave and "very much diminished his satisfaction with the great honours that he hoped for on coming to the King's presence."

The admiral's ship entered the Tagus early in September. Concealing his grief as best he could, da Gama went ashore to pay his respects to his sovereign, who received him with many expressions of regard and sympathy. Honours fell fast and thick on the explorer. He received a large pension, was raised to nobility, created Admiral of the Indies, and given many trading privileges which brought additional riches to his family. To show his thankfulness to Heaven, the King built a splendid cloister, named Bethlehem, on the spot where da Gama had embarked in 1497, and placed at the entrance a statue of Prince Henry the Navigator, whose untiring energy had sown the seed which had produced so notable a discovery.

Of da Gama's two subsequent voyages to Calicut there is no need to speak, for they served to detract from, rather than add to, the fame of a truly great sailor.

NOTE.—In the *Roteiro* an interesting account is given of the route by which spices were brought from India to Europe before the arrival of the Portuguese. From Calicut ships carried them to Jidda, on the Red Sea, where they were landed and taxed by the Sultan. They were then transferred to smaller craft, and transported to the head of the Gulf of Suez, and taxed again. An organized system of camel transport next took them across the desert to Cairo. Duties paid once more. Nile boats then advanced them to Rosetta. The Sultan there got his fourth bite. From Rosetta to Alexandria, the port of distribution, camels were required again. No wonder that the Portuguese wished for some more direct method of trading with India!

CHAPTER X

THE CONQUEST OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

Cristovao Colombo—His personality—Early years—Prowess as a captain—Goes to Lisbon—Marries a Portuguese lady—Life in the Madeira Islands—Correspondence with Toscanelli about the possibility of reaching Asia across the Atlantic—Columbus's calculations about the distance—His error—Missionary zeal—Did he know of Viking expeditions to Vinland?—Applies to King John II of Portugal for help—John's mean trick—Its failure—And Columbus's anger—He goes to Spain—Many delays, but patience ultimately rewarded—Agreement drawn up between Columbus and Isabella—The fleet sails from Palos—Faint-heartedness of the crews—Variation of the compass—First signs of land—Hopes repeatedly disappointed—Mutiny in the fleet—Columbus sees land—Goes ashore and takes possession—The natives—Sails south to Cuba—Desertion of one vessel—Wreck of a second—Hispaniola—Columbus returns to Spain—A terrible storm—Device to preserve the account of the voyage—Trouble with the Portuguese at the Azores—Columbus reaches Spain—Has a magnificent reception—Second voyage—Further exploration of Cuba—Which was thought to be a promontory of Asia—Columbus superseded—Returns to Spain—Third voyage—Discovers Guiana—Thrown into chains and taken back to Spain—Fourth voyage—Neglect and death.

AMONG the many adventurers drawn to Lisbon by the fame of the Portuguese discoveries made at the instigation of Henry the Navigator was a certain Genoese captain named Cristovao Colombo, or, to use the Latinized form, Christopher Columbus. At the time of his arrival, in 1470, he was in the full vigour of life—a

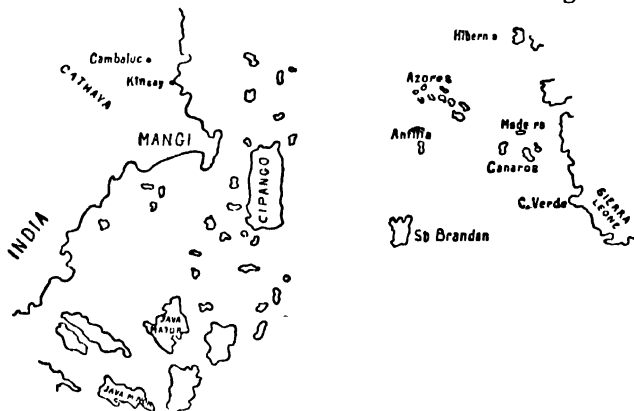
EARLY YEARS

tall, well-built man, who carried himself with a self-confident air, befitting one who had passed twenty-one out of his thirty-five years among the perils of a seafaring career.

In his boyhood Columbus showed a passionate desire to roam on the ocean. His native town, Genoa, had a vast maritime trade, and it was only natural that a boy should wish to have a share in the romantic adventures which formed the staple of market place gossip. While willing to gratify his longings, his father wisely decided that he should not go to sea before he had received such an education as should enable him to take a high place in his profession; and after grounding him in the elements, he sent him to the University of Pavia, where the young Columbus readily applied himself to a study of geometry, astronomy, and navigation. What he learnt at Pavia he was soon able to turn to practical account, for when only fourteen years old he shipped on a vessel commanded by a distant relative who had won some reputation as a fearless fighter. Of his personal history during the next twenty years we have very brief records. We know, however, that he took part in several naval skirmishes, and succeeded in winning credit by his intrepid conduct in action. On one occasion the ship under his command engaged a huge Venetian galley, and grappled it with the intention of boarding. Some hand-grenades thrown by the Venetians set both vessels alight. Columbus was obliged to follow the example of his men and to throw himself into the sea. The shore was six miles away, and to a man cumbered by his fighting harness the chances of

GOES TO LISBON

reaching it were small indeed; but fortunately the captain was a powerful swimmer, and aided by the support of an oar which he found floating about, he succeeded in gaining the land, which happened to be the Portuguese coast not far from Cape St. Vincent. Whether he proceeded straightway to Lisbon, as some accounts assert, is very doubtful. There is reason to believe that the sea-fight in



Sketch of the map of the Italian geographer Toscanelli, used by Columbus on his voyage of 1492. Both he and Toscanelli thought that a clear ocean way existed between the west coast of Europe and the east coast of Africa. Cipango is Japan; St. Brandon and Antilla were imaginary islands in the Atlantic.

question took place some years before his appearance at the capital, and that he went to seek employment under a foreign flag after deliberately assuring himself that Genoa had fewer chances to offer an enterprising sailor than those to be found in the new series of African voyages of discovery.

Within three years of his arrival in Lisbon he married a Portuguese lady of rank, Dona Felipa de Perestrello,

LIFE IN THE MADEIRA ISLANDS

and settled down with her on an estate in Porto Santo, one of the Madeira Islands. Here, on the outposts of civilization, he learnt the full story of the Portuguese expeditions, and began to revolve in his mind the possibility of reaching India by a voyage across the Atlantic. In or about the year 1474 he corresponded on the subject with Toscanelli, a famous Florentine geographer, who in his reply (which has been preserved) enclosed a letter addressed by him to Ferdinand Martinez, a canon of Lisbon, about the same matter in the same year. It appears that some one had already suggested to King Alfonso that India might be more easily attained westwards than southwards round Africa. Possibly Columbus himself or Toscanelli may have made the suggestion: we do not know. At any rate, Toscanelli believed that a voyage of about 3250 miles would bring the ship from the Canaries to Cipango, or Japan; and he backed up his belief by forwarding to both Martinez and Columbus a map showing what he considered to be the relative positions of the European and Asiatic coasts. A sketch of his map is given on the opposite page.

That Columbus was already seriously meditating a voyage westwards is found by the following passage in Toscanelli's second letter: "I regard as noble and grand your project of sailing from east to west according to the indications furnished by the map which I sent you. . . . I am much pleased to see that I have been well understood, and that the voyage has become not only possible but certain, fraught with honour as it must be, and inestimable gain and most lofty fame among all Christian

COLUMBUS'S CALCULATIONS

people. . . . When that voyage shall be accomplished, it will be a voyage to powerful kingdoms, and to cities and provinces most wealthy and noble, abounding in all sorts of things most desired by us ; I mean, with all kinds of spices and jewels in great abundance."

Columbus, while attaching great importance to Toscanelli's map, was not content with his estimate of the distances, which he considered to be excessive. It is interesting to note how he arrived at the figures which emboldened him to pursue his enterprise. Thirteen hundred years before this, Ptolemy had calculated the equatorial girth of the earth to be 20,400 miles. This Columbus assumed to be correct. Making allowance for latitude, the circumference at the Canaries would be about 18,000 miles. Of this distance he believed that one-seventh only was ocean, on the authority of the fourth book of Esdras¹ and of several early authors, including Alliacus, who in turn had borrowed from Roger Bacon. Dividing eighteen thousand by seven, he got as his quotient 2570 odd miles, a by no means formidable figure to voyagers even in those days.

Columbus was confirmed in his theory by many pieces of information which he diligently collected. From one person he heard of strange plants which had been washed on to the coast of the Azores ; from another, of curiously carved timbers picked up far out at sea ; or again, of lands sighted in the far distance by mariners driven from their course by storms. Tradition, too, spoke of islands in mid-ocean—St. Brandan, said to have been

¹ A book of the Apocrypha.

VISITS THE GOLD COAST

discovered by a monk in the sixth century, Atlantis, and Antilia. Altogether, Columbus thought that he had made out a very good case for his theory; and it is well that he was unaware of his errors, for, as Mr. John Fiske says,¹ "When we consider how difficult he found it to obtain men and ships for a voyage supposed to be not more than 2500 miles in this new and untried direction, we must admit that his chances would have been poor indeed if he had proposed to sail westward on the Sea of Darkness for nearly 12,000 miles, the real distance from the Canaries to Japan. It was a case where the littleness of the knowledge was not a dangerous but a helpful thing."

To his desire to establish the correctness of his calculations Columbus added a fervent missionary zeal in the cause of Christianity. European vessels should bring to the West the riches of Asia; they should also carry to the East the light of the true faith, and so bring all Asiatic heathens into the fold of the Church. We must not lose sight of the deeply religious nature of the great explorer. His belief that he was the chosen instrument of Heaven for the conversion of the races beyond the ocean upheld him in many a moment of severest trial, and gave him the courage which rose superior to opposition of every kind.

To provide himself with personal knowledge which might be of use for effecting his great purpose, Columbus visited the Gold Coast, and sailed as far north as Iceland. This last expedition has been thought to have acquainted him with the exploits of the Vikings in Vinland five

¹ *The Discovery of America.*

APPLIES TO KING JOHN FOR HELP

hundred years previously; but it is highly improbable that he ever heard of the Norse expeditions, for he never refers to them, and we can hardly imagine that he would have kept silence about what might have proved a most weighty argument in favour of his scheme at Court. Also it is doubtful whether the descriptions given in the Sagas of the shores of Vinland would have either impressed him as being more than mere fancy, for the object of his search was the wealth of Asia, not the rugged and inhospitable shores of a new continent.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that Portuguese exploration languished somewhat during the reign of Alfonso the Fifth, but was stimulated by the accession of John the Second in 1481. About the time that Diego Cam was feeling his way down the African coast to Wal-fish Bay, Columbus approached the new King with the proposal that he should furnish him with men and ships to carry out his scheme. John, after hearing his arguments in full, referred the matter to his geographers, who, without any hesitation, condemned the project as impracticable. They had, probably, a much more correct idea than Columbus of the true circumference of the globe and of the extent of Asia; and as they, in common with other learned men of the time, were entirely ignorant of the discoveries of the Vikings, they had no grounds for suspecting the existence of an intermediate continent. So that their verdict was quite reasonable.

The King was not, however, ready to let the matter drop; and, at the suggestion of the Bishop of Ceuta, stooped to an act of great meanness. Columbus had asked a very



From photograph by Hulton-Deutsch

A TRAGEDY OF ARCTIC EXPLORATION

Hudson, the discoverer of the Straits which bear his name, was on Midsummer Day 1611, placed by his mutinous crew in an open boat along with his son and seven of his men and cast adrift. The explorer and his six companions were never heard of again. Hudson's projected work begun by John Davis, who twenty-three years before had found the entrance to the Straits.

JOHN'S MEAN TRICK

high price for his services. Why not, said the wily bishop, send out a vessel secretly to see if there were any foundations for his theory? If Asia were reached, the glory would redound to His Majesty alone; and in either event much expense would be saved.

Under pretence of taking provisions to the Cape Verde Islands, a caravel was despatched into the Atlantic with Columbus' charts and instructions on board. But on encountering stormy weather, the captain, who regarded his task as a mere wild-goose chase, soon lost heart, and ran back to port. News of this attempt presently reached the ears of Columbus. Furious at the trick which had been played upon him, he at once left Lisbon for the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish King and Queen, hoping to receive fairer treatment from them.

When he arrived at the Castilian Court he found the two sovereigns preoccupied with the final struggle against the Moors of Granada. So cool was his reception that he returned in 1487 to Lisbon to meet his brother Bartholomew, who had sailed with Diaz on his memorable voyage, and despatched him to the Courts of Henry the Seventh of England and Charles the Eighth of France. While Bartholomew waited fruitlessly on these monarchs, Christopher again approached Isabella, who had shown him more sympathy than the King. The country was still in the throes of war, and though he followed the Court from camp to camp he could get no definite answer. At last, sickened by repeated delays, he had decided to shake the dust of Spain off his feet, and in person to try his

THE FLEET SAILS FROM PALOS

fortune at Paris, when he received a summons from the Queen to attend her at Granada, which was being besieged by the Spanish forces. Isabella promised that she would consider his scheme seriously as soon as the city should be captured. On January 2nd, 1492, the Moorish stronghold capitulated, and, true to her word, Isabella gave Columbus an audience. Unfortunately, his somewhat overbearing manner and the extravagance of his demands led to negotiations being broken off.

Columbus immediately quitted the Court and prepared to go to France. But before he had gone far a messenger overtook him. The Queen, persuaded by certain ladies who were interested in the adventurer, had changed her mind. He was to return to Granada without delay.

And now at last he reaped the reward of all his perseverance. An agreement was drawn up between him and Isabella, whereby Columbus secured for himself and his heirs the office of admiral in all islands and continents he might discover in the ocean ; for himself the viceroyalty of all these islands and continents ; and one-tenth of all the articles found, bought, or bartered within his jurisdiction. He received also, among other things, the right of contributing one-eighth of the expenses of fitting out any expedition and of receiving an equal proportion of the profits.

We need not dwell upon the many vexatious delays with which Columbus had to contend during the equipping of a fleet. Let it suffice to say that on August 3rd, 1492, three vessels left the port of Palos, carrying ninety persons. The craft were named the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the

FAINT-HEARTEDNESS

Nina (Baby). The two last had no decks, and appeared very little suited for the voyage which lay before them. Seldom had an expedition started under less favourable conditions. "A deep gloom was spread over the whole community of Palos at their departure, for almost every one had some relative or friend on board the squadron. The spirits of the seamen, already depressed by their own affairs, were still more cast down at the affliction of those they had left behind, who took leave of them with tears and lamentations and dismal forebodings, as of men they were never to see again."

Columbus headed for the Canaries, intending to sail thence due west along the 28th parallel of latitude, until he should come to Japan. Scarcely had the land disappeared over the horizon when trouble began. The *Pinta's* rudder was broken, purposely, Columbus believed, so that the crew might be left behind. The admiral managed, however, to patch up the damage sufficiently to enable the *Pinta* to reach the Canaries, where he waited three weeks looking for another vessel to replace her. As none could be found, a new rudder was constructed, and the voyage resumed.

The sight of Teneriffe belching forth flames and smoke was interpreted by the sailors as a terrible portent of the dangers awaiting them. The calm which overtook the ships on the first day out also seemed to be a sign that the Almighty frowned on the enterprise; and when a breeze sprang up, and quickly wafted the squadron into the ocean, many of the men wept like children. Columbus tried in vain to soothe their fears by glowing pictures of the riches

VARIATION OF THE COMPASS

that would be theirs if only they threw their hearts into the undertaking. He then resorted to the expedient of keeping two log-books ; a correct one, for his own eye alone ; and an incorrect one, open to inspection. In the second he generally entered a smaller number of miles than those actually covered, so that, if land should not appear within the calculated distance, the crew might not accuse him of having deliberately misled them.

The sailors soon found a fresh cause for alarm. The compass, the emblem of steadfastness, began to behave in a curious manner, for, instead of pointing a little to the east of the pole star, it shifted more and more to the west. Protests were now heard against sailing farther into regions where the very laws of nature seemed to be changing. Columbus had an explanation ready, not a correct one, but sufficiently learned to allay misgivings as to the cause of this phenomenon.

In the middle of September birds of species which are not supposed to wander far from land were seen. Soon afterwards the ships entered vast tracts of seaweed such as usually is found on rocks and in rivers. The wind was favourable ; the sun shone brightly. All these helped for a while to give encouragement to the sailors, who believed that they were now quite close to land. Again and again clouds low on the horizon were mistaken for the shores of a distant continent. Repeated disappointment presently began to have its effect. When the wind dropped and left the ships motionless among floating masses of weed, the crews, not without reason, were overtaken by the fear that their fast dwindling supplies might be entirely

MUTINY IN THE FLEET

exhausted before they should have a chance of replenishing them. Columbus presently became aware that his men were on the edge of a rebellion, which the more desperate characters would easily have carried to the extreme of murdering their commander. Fortunately, before an actual outbreak occurred, the wind again blew favourably; and every one became absorbed in a constant look-out for land, as a reward had been promised by Isabella to him who should first sight the shores of Asia.

On October 7th the smallest vessel signalled that land really had been seen. As usual, an over-excited fancy had mistaken clouds for solid earth. Columbus was obliged to issue orders that any one who should give a false alarm in the future would thereby be debarred from receiving the reward under any circumstances.

The crews again became mutinous, demanding that the helm should be put about and the attempt abandoned. Their commander turned a deaf ear to their outcry. They had, he said, come so far that it was useless to turn back; what was more, while life allowed, he was determined to persevere, until, by the grace of God, success should smile upon the enterprise.

Once again a desperate situation was saved by the appearance of encouraging signs—weeds, a branch of thorn with berries on it, a piece of board, and, most significant of all, a staff artificially carved. There could no longer be any doubt that they were approaching land.

On the evening of October 11th, Columbus, standing on the lofty poop of his vessel, saw a light moving in the distance. Early next morning, before dawn, land loomed

GOES ASHORE

ahead, about six miles away. Anchors were dropped, and all the crews waited eagerly for the dawn. "The thoughts and feelings of Christopher Columbus," says Washington Irving, "in this little space of time must have been tumultuous and intense. At length, in spite of every difficulty and danger, he had accomplished his object. The great mystery of the ocean was revealed; his theory, which had been the scoff of sages, was triumphantly established; he had secured to himself a glory durable as the world itself." At daybreak boats were lowered, and Columbus went ashore with a large part of his crew. As befitted such an occasion, he was richly attired, and bore in his hand the royal standard of Castile. No sooner had he stepped ashore than he fell on his knees, kissed the earth, and with tears of joy gave thanks to God for bringing him safely through so many perils. He then took formal possession of the island—for such it had proved to be—in the name of Ferdinand and Isabella, naming it San Salvador; and called upon all his men to take the oath of obedience to him as admiral and viceroy of these newly discovered territories. This they readily did. Their feelings had undergone such a change that the men who but a few days before had headed the mutiny were now loudest in expressing enthusiastic devotion.

The natives had fled on the approach of the ships. But as the Spaniards did not attempt to pursue them, they gradually regained sufficient confidence to approach the invaders, prostrating themselves as if in adoration of superhuman beings; and even ventured to touch their

SAILS SOUTH TO CUBA

beards, and examine the whiteness of their hands and faces. The curiosity was mutual, for the Spaniards had never before seen copper coloured people, with faces partly concealed by patches of paint.

What interested the Spaniards most was the sight of small gold rings, which the natives wore in their noses. The admiral asked where the gold came from, and understood the Indians to say that its source was lands on the north-west, south-west, and south. There, he thought, surely lay Cipango and the realms of the Khan of Tartary, of whose wealth so many tales had been brought to Europe by travellers.

A ten days' cruise among the Bahamas satisfied Columbus that he had reached the islands off the coast of Cathay. Following the suggestions of the natives, he steered south, and struck the north coast of Cuba, which charmed him with the beauty of its scenery. But if this was Cipango, where were the populous cities, the gold, the spices? He was sorely perplexed, and sailed eastwards along the shore to gather information. On November 20th, Martin Pinzon, captain of the *Pinta*, deserted him and made for Spain to claim the credit of having discovered the Indies. "This was the earliest instance of a kind of treachery such as too often marred the story of Spanish exploration and conquest in the New World."

On reaching the most easterly point of Cuba, Columbus altered his course slightly to the south, and soon reached a land which he named Hispaniola, or Spanish Land. This, too, was so beautiful as to enchant the discoverer. But his admiration was rudely interrupted by the wreck

THE RETURN VOYAGE

of his ship on a sand-bank. There remained now only the little *Nina*, much too small to carry both crews; so that further exploration would have to be postponed for the present. A blockhouse was therefore built on the coast out of the timbers of the wreck, armed with guns, and garrisoned with forty men. The *Nina* weighed anchor for Europe on January 4th, 1493.

Two days later Columbus overtook the *Pinta*, which had been delayed by trading with the natives. Pinzon tried to exculpate himself by pretending that his vessel had been separated from that of his commander during a storm. For the time Columbus thought it wise to accept his explanation; though he decided to attempt no more examination of the islands in the company of a comrade on whom he could so little rely.

The return voyage was marked by a terrific storm which overtook them in mid-ocean. It lasted for three days with unabated fury. Vow after vow was made by the crew to perform pilgrimages should their vessel ever come safely to land; but still the admiral's ship was so battered and tossed about that it seemed as if destruction could not long be postponed. Columbus, even at such a crisis, thought less of death than of the loss that Spain would incur were the story of his voyage to perish with him. "In the midst of these gloomy apprehensions an expedient suggested itself, by which, though he and his ships should perish, the glory of his achievements might survive to his name, and its advantages be secured to his sovereigns. He wrote on parchment a brief account of his voyage of discovery, and of his having taken posses-

A TERRIBLE STORM

sion of the newly found lands in the name of their Catholic Majesties. This he sealed and directed to the King and Queen, superscribing a promise of a thousand ducats to whomsoever should deliver the packet unopened. He then wrapped it in a waxed cloth, which he placed in the centre of a cake of wax, and enclosing the whole in a large barrel, threw it into the sea, giving his men to suppose that he was performing some religious vow. Lest this memorial should never reach the land, he enclosed a copy in a similar manner, and placed it on the poop, so that, should the caravel be swallowed up by the waves, the barrel might float off and survive."

When the storm at last subsided, the *Nina* had approached the Azores, a Portuguese possession, where some of his men were seized by the authorities, acting under orders from Portugal to hold Columbus's expedition if ever it should come to those islands. The admiral managed, by the exercise of some tact, to get his men aboard again, and without delay sailed for Europe.

After experiencing another severe storm, the *Nina* reached the mouth of the Tagus. Of the *Pinta* nothing had been seen or heard since the first great tempest. Though suspicious of the attitude of the Portuguese after his reception at the Azores, Columbus was obliged to seek the harbour. As soon as the crew landed, messengers were despatched to the Castilian Court, and to the King of Portugal, who invited him to an audience at Valparaiso, twenty-seven miles from Lisbon. Columbus accordingly visited the King and gave a full account of his voyage and of the discoveries which he had made. The King,

COLUMBUS REACHES SPAIN

concealing his jealousy and mortification, received the distinguished traveller very graciously, and sent him back with a noble escort to his ship. On the way Columbus stopped at Villa Franca to relate his adventures to the Queen and her ladies, who listened eagerly to the narrative of the now famous explorer.

On March 15th the townsfolk of Palos were electrified by the news that one of the vessels which had left their port seven months before on what was generally supposed to be a desperate mission, had returned with great and glorious tidings. Business ceased at once. Every one hurried to the quays to welcome the admiral, now no longer the object of curses such as had been flung at him as he sailed away with an unwilling crew aboard. The very same evening the *Pinta* also entered the harbour. Pinzon, separated from his superior in the storm, had been driven into the Bay of Biscay, and put into Bayonne. From there he sent letters to Ferdinand and Isabella, requesting leave to wait on them in person and relate the story of the discoveries in which he had taken part. Unfortunately for his schemes, Columbus's letter had already been delivered, and he received the curt command to go to Palos and there remain till the admiral should arrive. The chagrin and failure broke his heart. He died within a few days of landing in his native town.

Meanwhile Columbus was enjoying the most glorious moments of his life. At the request of the two sovereigns he set off for Barcelona, which he entered about the middle of April. From all sides people had poured in to

MAGNIFICENT RECEPTION

catch a glimpse of the man who had brought incalculable glory to Spain at the expense of her rival Portugal. His entrance was a very triumph. In front walked five Indians brought from Hayti. After them were carried a collection of birds, alive or stuffed, strange animals, plants, and fruits. Then came a display of Indian gold and jewellery, on which the populace feasted their eyes greedily. Last of all rode Columbus, attended by the pick of Castilian chivalry. As he passed, shouts of welcome rose from the crowded pavements, roofs, balconies, and windows.

The King and Queen received him in splendid state, surrounded by the greatest nobles of the land. As he approached they rose, as if receiving a person of the highest rank, and when he knelt to do homage they bade him rise and be seated, a mark of special distinction.

When he had finished a glowing recital of the inexhaustible wealth of the new realms claimed for Spain, and exhibited his vegetable, animal, and mineral treasures, the two sovereigns knelt down in a prayer of gratitude to Heaven. The strains of the *Te Deum*, sung by the choir of the royal chapel, brought this memorable reception to a close.

But royal favour still followed Columbus. He often appeared in public riding by the side of the King. To establish his fame a coat-of-arms was bestowed upon him, showing in the upper fields the castle of Castile and the lion of Leon; in the lower, a sea full of islands and a group of five anchors. Columbus had now reached the summit of his career. The rest of his life was a continuous struggle with misfortunes, due partly to his own

SECOND VOYAGE

lack of judgment, partly to the jealousy which success such as he had won could not but awaken among a people so proud as the Spanish. We will notice very briefly how this famous discoverer fared during the thirteen years that intervened between his first return to Spain and his death in 1506.

The reports of wealth brought home by the admiral aroused a regular gold fever throughout the Peninsula. Thousands of people of all classes were anxious to sail westwards to the El Dorado. In May, 1493, a fleet of seventeen vessels, with fifteen thousand men on board, left Cadiz under the command of Columbus. As this expedition was intended to colonize the new countries, priests were included among the passengers; while horses, kine, and other domestic animals formed part of the cargo.

Columbus had no misgivings about the position of Hispaniola and Cuba. He felt certain that Cuba was a promontory of China, and Hispaniola an island lying somewhere to the north of Cipango, or Japan. On this occasion he steered more to the south, in the hope that he would so pass below China direct to India. Early in November he struck the Lesser Antilles group of islands, which stretch from the mouth of the Orinoco to the Greater Antilles (Hayti, Cuba, etc.). Passing by Dominica, he landed on Guadaloupe, where traces of cannibalism were discovered, and the natives offered a strenuous resistance, killing some Spaniards with poisoned darts. The ships then headed for the settlement on the north coast of Hispaniola. This they found in ashes. The colonists had been murdered by the natives. Leaving

RETURNS TO SPAIN

this unlucky spot, the fleet cruised along the south of Cuba, until the commander's patience was exhausted; and he made his men take an oath that Cuba was a promontory of the mainland, though it had not been definitely traced to its junction with China. Columbus then devoted his attention to the subjugation of Hispaniola, and while so engaged was superseded in his command by Juan Aguado, whom the Spanish monarchs had been persuaded to send out on the testimony of some renegade colonists as to the conduct of the admiral.

He returned at once to Spain, and having again succeeded in convincing the monarchs of the wealth of the Indies, set out on a third voyage in January, 1498. In July he discovered Trinidad, and sighted the mainland of South America. This he imagined to be a vast island. To Columbus is not due, however, the honour of first beholding a New World continent, since in the previous year Sebastian Cabot had reached Labrador.

We need not linger over the miserable quarrels in which Columbus found himself entangled when he reached Hispaniola, and which ended in his being carried back to Spain a chained prisoner. He was at once released, but two years elapsed before he received another command. In May, 1502, he sailed for the fourth time, with the purpose of following the north coast of South America till he should reach the passage which he believed to separate it from Cathay. After touching at Jamaica, he came to the little island of Guanaja, in the Gulf of Honduras, and there fell in with a boat as long as his own ship and eight feet in the beam, hollowed out of a

FOURTH VOYAGE

single tree-trunk. The commander of this strange craft, and all his crew, were evidently people of a higher civilization than those of Hispaniola. They probably came from Yucatan. Columbus, who listened eagerly to their descriptions of the wealth of the country from which they came, did not sail westwards. Had he done so he would probably have discovered Mexico, and the riches for which he had so long been seeking. As it was, he turned south and skirted the coast of the Isthmus of Panama, which he imagined to be the Golden Peninsula.¹ A storm caused him to turn back when he was on the point of discovering that the supposed peninsula was continuous with the shores skirted on his previous voyage. "So he died in the belief that Hispaniola was Japan; Cuba a peninsula of Asia, the Isthmus of Panama a peninsula of Malacca, and that between the latter and the north coast of South America, which he supposed to be an island, there must be a passage to the Indian seas, and that this way would prove shorter and less dangerous than the Portuguese way round the Cape of Good Hope."

After a voyage rendered dangerous by the rotten condition of his ships, Columbus reached Jamaica, just in time to escape drowning; for the vessels sank after making the land. A canoe was despatched to Hispaniola, to ask for succour from Ovando, governor of that island. He had no friendship for Columbus. A whole year of the miseries arising from faction passed by before help came to the party shipwrecked on Jamaica. The admiral then sailed to Hispaniola, where he remained a few weeks.

¹ Malay Peninsula.